Something Green Still Grows
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Teen And Up Audiences

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僕のヒーローアカデミア | Boku no Hero Academia | My Hero Academia (Anime & Manga)

Relationships:
Aizawa Shouta | Eraserhead/Yamada Hizashi | Present Mic, Aizawa Shouta | Eraserhead & Midoriya Izuku, Midoriya Izuku & Yamada Hizashi | Present Mic, Class 1-A & Midoriya Izuku, Midoriya Izuku & Shinsou Hitoshi

Characters:
Aizawa Shouta | Eraserhead, Midoriya Izuku, Yamada Hizashi | Present Mic, Todoroki Shouto, Shinsou Hitoshi, Bakugou Katsuki, Yagi Toshinori | All Might, Shigaraki Tomura | Shimura Tenko, Kurogiri (My Hero Academia), Class 1-A (My Hero Academia)

Additional Tags:
Parental Aizawa Shouta | Eraserhead | Dadzawa, Parental Yamada Hizashi | Present Mic, Aizawa Shouta | Eraserhead Adopts Midoriya Izuku, Vigilante Midoriya Izuku, Dead Midoriya Inko, Quirkless Midoriya Izuku, Quirk Discrimination (My Hero Academia), Midoriya Izuku Does Not Have One for All Quirk, Yagi Toshinori | All Might Bashing, Minor Midoriya Izuku/Todoroki Shouto, I Wrote This Instead of Sleeping, Fluff and Angst, Mild Hurt/Comfort, Found Family, Alternate Universe - Canon Divergence, Snarky Midoriya Izuku, Shinsou Hitoshi Replaces Mineta Minoru, Deaf Yamada Hizashi | Present Mic, Canon-Typical Violence

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Something Green Still Grows

by AwkwardRaven

Summary

What if Inko Midoriya died in a tragic accident, leaving 6 year old Izuku alone. Disillusioned with the hero system, and crushed by his idol, he becomes the vigilante Verdant. When he gets taken in by Pro Heroes Eraserhead and Present Mic, and enrolled in UA, it seems as though his long-abandoned childhood dreams might finally have a chance of coming true.

A Vigilante!Deku rewrite of season 1 of the anime.

Notes

I have been sitting on this fic idea since about 2019 and the hype for season 8 finally had me sitting down to actually write it.

I will hopefully be updating every Sunday.

Hope you enjoy!

Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Aizawa Shouta sighed as he made his way to the first day of homeroom with his new class of first years. There had seemed to be more villains than usual out on his patrol route last night and as a result he hadn't gotten home to bed until well after Hizashi had already left for his morning radio show. Sometimes he really cursed their conflicting schedules.

They had just about had time for breakfast together after Hizashi had come home to change into his hero costume before school but it was too little time to spend with his husband in Shouta's opinion.

After arriving at school they had then sat in companionable silence going through start of the year paper work in the teacher's lounge. Hizashi was writing up lesson plans while Shouta went through the list of students that had been assigned to him. A few faces had been recognisable: Tensei's brother, Endeavor's youngest, and a blond kid he recognised from the news report of the sludge villain from a few months prior. And of course his Problem Child.

He could feel a headache coming on from lack of sleep already, and he could tell it was only going to get worse as he could already hear the racket coming from the other side of his classroom door as he approached it, stopping outside the closed door to listen in on their conversations.

He could recognise the voice of Tensei's little brother arguing with another male voice rising over the indistinct chatter coming from the rest of the class. Shouta was doubtful that the kid would recognise him as one of his brother's friends given how little they had time to meet up anymore.

Shouta cocooned himself inside his sleeping bag and laid down on the floor. He was of the opinion that hero students should be prepared for anything, and when was better to start that lessons than straight away. At least this would give him an indication of anyone who he deemed to be unsuitable for hero work early on.

Once he was comfortably situated, he slid the door open. "If you're

here to make friends then I suggest you should just leave now."

While waiting for everyone to quiet down, he sat there and counted, making a mental note of who took the longest. When the classroom had fallen completely silent he stood up and freed himself from his sleeping bag, slinging it over his shoulder as he walked to the front of the class.

"It took you three minutes for you all to be silent, you are too irrational." While he expected some level of chat from a group of excited 15 year olds, there were some students who he could tell were going to give him grey hairs. Bakugo for one, now clearly proven to have been the one Iida was arguing with. Shouta also made a note to himself to keep and eye on the small purple kid who appeared to already be eyeing up the female students, as well as the Todoroki boy. In comparison with everyone else in the room he was almost too quiet and Shouta had seen him flinch ever so slightly when he had scolded them. Considering what he knew about Endeavor's temper, he already had a suspicion as to how he had ended up with that scar.

Finally there was his Problem Child. Izuku Midoriya. Verdant.

He was sat quietly near the back of the room clearly studying his new classmates. As far as Shouta could tell he had brushed off all attempts at conversation and was now very unsubtly trying not to laugh at his little performance earlier.

Shouta stiffed another sigh. "Get changed into your PE kits and meet me at training field alpha in 10 minutes." He ordered before sloping back out of the room, leaving his sleeping bag under his desk for later.

The talking started before he was properly out of the room.

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10 minutes later on the dot the whole class was changed and outside. Clearly someone had spread word of his expulsion record because not a peep could be heard from a single student.

After he was done explaining the task and issuing his threat of expulsion to the student who came in last, he had Bakugo up first to do the ball throw. The kid clearly had something to prove. As each successive student was called up, all of them did their best to improve on their scores from middle school with the use of their Quirks. All except one, that is.

Shouta had a feeling that Izuku was going to pull something like this.

He had forewarned the kid of his intentions to carry out a Quirk test on the first day and offered to let him stay of sick to avoid it but Izuku had been insistent that he would participate along with the rest of the class. His argument being that it would be unfair to everyone else for him to get a free pass just because he lived with their teacher. Shouta wasn't going to argue with that kind of logic.

As it turned out 'participate' was a strong word to use because when the kid stepped up for his turn he wound up as if to throw it, and then dropped the ball at his feet. The rest of the class looked so stunned as Izuku calmly walked out of the throwing circle that Shouta had to hide his grin inside his capture weapon.

"Dude…" someone whispered and a ripple of shocked laughter and other exclamations spread through the group.

The rest of the test continues in much the same fashion with Izuku doing the absolute bare minimum for each task and everyone else throwing increasingly more worried glances between himself and the kid. He pretended not to notice.

They were half way through the final task when Shouta looked around and saw All Might of all people peeking around the corner of the building. Why the Number 1 Hero felt the need to spy on his first year class he had no idea but he wasn't about to let him near his students unsupervised, even if he was a teacher now. Especially not one student in particular. He pretended he hadn't seen the man, eyes straying over to see if his Problem Child had also noticed the skeletal form of All Might thinking he was being sneaky.

Apparently, Izuku had noticed.

Izuku rolled his eyes at him before looking away and stepping up the take his turn at the last event, the 100 metre sprint. Shouta had to silently agree with Izuku's silent assessment of All Might's intelligence. How the man had managed to keep his failing health a secret for so long was a mystery to him.

Shouta just knew that Izuku was going to do something stupid now that he knew All Might's attention was on him and the kid exceeded his expectations. In all the other events he had technically completed the task, just in the most mediocre way possible, however, when Shouta blew the whistle to start the race Izuku simply stood on the start line as the other people in his heat raced off. It was although he

hadn't even heard the whistle.

"Midoriya" Shouta said, feeling that he couldn't let this one slide and still maintain his credibility as a strict teacher. While he had ignored Izuku's lack of effort for the most part as he was still technically participating, he felt he had to call out this blatant disregard for his instructions, despite how funny the look on All Might's face was.

"Eraser?" Izuku replied innocently and Shouta came to the realisation in that moment that this kid was going to spell the end for his scary teacher persona. Great.

"What exactly was that?"

The rest of the group had gone completely silent again, perhaps fearful that he was going to expel the kid on the spot.

Izuku just smiled at him from where he still hadn't moved from the start line. "Sorry Sensei, I didn't hear the whistle." There was no sincerity behind the words at all.

Damn this kid.

"Fine. I'll let you off just this once" Shouta sighed out, he decided that it was worth it to see All Might practically having to lift his jaw off the ground but he couldn't help but wonder if the Number One Hero recognised the kid.

Unsurprisingly, Izuku ended up dead last overall. While his classmates looked even more fearful for him, he simply stood in their midst, completely unfazed by the result. Shouta had decided that all the kids had shown enough promise to be allowed to continue until their second day at least, so he revealed that the expulsion threat had been a strategic deception, showing them his creepiest grin, then walking off towards the teacher's lounge, dismissing them over his shoulder.

Before he got too far, he heard commotion start behind him as most of the class appeared to gather around Izuku and start throwing questions at him.

"Why didn't you use your Quirk?"

"How did you know he wouldn't expel you?"

Shouta glanced back when he was sure all of the attention was off of him to see Izuku's response.

"Aw, well it wouldn't be very fun if I told you that now, would it?" He replied and threw a wink at his classmates before he extracted himself from the group and started walking back to the changing rooms.

Shouta didn't bother to hide his laughter this time and completely ignored the incredulous look All Might gave him as he past. He couldn't wait to tell Hizashi about their Problem Child's first day.

Izuku ducked into the teacher's lounge as soon as he was finished changing back into his school uniform. He counted himself lucky that the majority of his classmates had decided to take their time walking back, chatting and getting to know each other on the way. The few who hadn't also had no interest in striking up a conversation with him.

Izuku had noticed that Endeavor's son had a large bruise covering most of his lower back and side when he had glanced over at him from across the room. The boy was pretty, sue him. Given how he was clearly changing quickly to avoid it being seen, Izuku decided not to say anything with their classmates around. While Endeavor was one of the hero's Izuku hated the most, his son was intriguing enough for Izuku to want to try and talk to him later. He also had made a mental note to report the bruise to Eraser later; it didn't surprise Izuku that it appeared that Endeavor was as shit of a father as he was a hero.

As Izuku was just about finished getting changed, the rest of the class had finally arrived prompting Izuku to grab his things and hurry to the door. On his way out, he had caught the tale end of a conversation that sounded suspiciously like the short one with balls on his head was plotting to spy on the girls changing. How he had ended up in the hero course Izuku couldn't fathom.

Still, he had had no desire to stick around to talk to the louder members of his class who he had no doubt would waste no time in bombarding him with questions about his quirk if given the chance. So. Teacher's lounge it was.

As the quirk test had finished a little before the lunch bell had rung, the room was thankfully nearly empty as he entered. Eraser was already there, but he simply had raised his eyebrows at him and said nothing as Izuku made himself comfortable on the sofa for a nap. Cementos and Snipe were the only other occupants of the room and as all the teachers had been made aware of Izuku's unique situation, they

quickly returned to what they were doing.

He had only just managed to doze off when he heard the door slam open and a familiar, loud voice rang throughout the room.

"Hey Shou, how was class? Hope you didn't already expel anyone" Mic said, throwing finger guns in Eraser's direction. "Oh hey, little listener!" He added as he flopped down next to Izuku on the sofa. "Have a good morning?"

Izuku simply closed his eyes again, ignoring his guardian. "Sleeping." He replied.

Mic squawked performatively, clutching his heart and saying something about everyone in his house loving sleep more than him.

Izuku heard Aizawa huff fondly at his husband's antics.

"Not yet" he replied, equally ignoring Izuku's part in the conversation.

"Aw well, there's still time left for a first day expulsion I suppose"

"Problem Child" Eraser called. Izuku could feel the sofa dip more as Aizawa sat down next to Mic but he kept his eyes firmly shut.

Eraser sighed. "Problem Child, you know how much I hate to disturb naps, but you should go and socialise with your new classmates, not hang out here with us"

Izuku groaned dramatically and finally opened his eyes to level Eraser with his best glare.

"Wow you two are so similar, are you sure you aren't actually related?" Mic butted in from where he was now lounged across Eraser's lap.

Izuku had to stifle a laugh as Eraser turned his glare on his husband. Mic didn't even make an attempt to. He immediately burst into laughter.

"See!" He exclaimed after he caught his breath. "But I agree with Shouta little listener, you should be out there with people your own age, not oldies like us."

"We're not that old" Eraser protested under his breath.

"But I don't want to answer their questions about my quirk or how I go

onto the hero course of all things without one"

"Look kid," Eraser leaned forward, gently pushing Mic out of his lap, "you can tell them as much or as little as you want to about how you got here, we'll go with whatever you say." His tone changed then, making Izuku regret ever deciding to be a smart arse during Eraser's first lesson. "And you're not allowed to spend lunch in here anymore until you make some friends."

The deliberately unsettling, Cheshire Cat grin Eraser sent him then was enough for Izuku to pull himself up off the sofa with a groan. He knew that grin meant trouble if he didn't obey. The kind of trouble that got his support items confiscated and even he wasn't stupid enough to think he could be any use without them.

"Fine, fine. I'm gone."

He vaulted himself over the back of the sofa towards the door. As he turned to close the door he saw Eraser slump into Mic's side. Izuku couldn't help but smile softly to himself. He had considered himself to be cursed with bad luck his entire life, but having attracted Eraser's attention and ended up in their care, and on the hero course, seemed like the universe was finally cutting him some slack.

The halls were pretty much empty by now, with everyone having retreated to either the cafeteria or outside. Izuku decided he should head to the cafeteria too, despite not being hungry, figuring that was where majority of his classmates would have gathered.

He mulled over Eraser's request of him. Friends. He wasn't sure he knew what friendship constituted. He had fuzzy memories of a blonde kid from his childhood calling him Izu-chan and playing with All Might figures together. But that had been before his mum had died. Before he had been shipped from foster home to foster home, never fully settling in anywhere because he knew from experience no one wanted a useless, quirkless kid. Before All Might himself had crushed Izuku's dreams of being a hero and before Izuku had, perhaps out of a childish wish to cling onto his goals or perhaps just to spite the Number One Hero, become Verdant.

Entering the cafeteria, Izuku had to brace himself. If he thought his classmates were overly loud, this was so much worse. Years of being left alone and eventually separating himself from others before they could find out he was quirkless had left him unequipped to deal with the sudden onslaught of noise and colour in the room.

He stood in the entryway, contemplating the possibility of escaping and heading back to the sanctuary that was the teacher's lounge, Eraser's threats be damned. He could survive a few nights without vigilante work before Eraser inevitably took pity on him.

He took too long.

"Hey, Midoriya!" A bright voice rose above the rest of the chatter and caught his attention.

It was the girl with the gravity cancellation quirk.

"Come sit with us!" She shouted, gesturing for him to come. With her sat the blue haired boy with the speed quirk, and the frog girl. They were all staring at him expectantly.

Reluctantly, Izuku made his way over to their table. The questions began almost as soon as he had sat down and introductions had been made, making him wish he had escaped when he had the chance.

"So Midoriya, we were just discussing how amazing everyone's quirks were" began Uraraka. She stopped, clearly realising that maybe there was a good reason he hadn't shown his quirk in front of the class.

"We wanted to know what you quirk was and why you didn't use it." Clearly Asui didn't have any qualms about being direct. Izuku had to smile a bit at the bluntness, people mincing words to avoid offence regarding his quirklessness annoyed him.

"I did use my quirk." Izuku paused for a moment to take in their confused faces. He smiled. "I have an analysis quirk."

"I see, similar to Principle Nezu?"

Izuku nodded.

"We're sorry for assuming you didn't use it then" Uraraka said.

He watched as the three of them started speculating about the benefits of having a non-visible quirk, and how it was a great power for a hero to have. It almost made Izuku want to tell them the truth.

When Eraser had decided to enrol him in UA, they had discovered that the school had rule that Izuku could only describe as quirkist. No quirkless individuals were allowed to be a student in the hero course. Eraser, much to Izuku's dismay, had gone to Nezu to demand that the

rule be changed but according to Nezu 'these things took time'. Eraser had reported this response back to him with a heavy eye roll. Izuku had thought then that Eraser would give up this idea of him going to UA to officially get his hero license but in hindsight he should have known that the old man wasn't going to give up that easily.

A few days later Eraser had presented him with his UA application with 'Quirk Analysis' written in the box for quirk information. Even Izuku had to admit that it was a good solution and had allowed Eraser to submit it, along with an application to use a select few of his support items during the physical portion of the entrance exam.

Mic had screamed so loud when his acceptance letter had arrived that Eraser had had to cancel his quirk to save all of their ears.

While all the teaching staff had been informed he was the stray vigilante that Mic and Eraser had adopted, Izuku was sure they hadn't also been informed that he was quirkless. He suspected Nezu had figured it out though.

Izuku was snapped out of his memories by Iida chopping a hand robotically in front of his face. It took everything Izuku had not to flinch away.

"By the way Midoriya, it was incredibly rude to Aizawa-sensei for you to not even try in the quirk test. Even if your quirk is not a physical one you should still try your best at everything you do."

"Tell me, how exactly do you expect me to compete with all flashy quirks in a test with no support items?" Izuku asked sarcastically. "Eraser obviously knew my quirk before setting the test, so either he would have to be a quirkist asshole to actually expel the lowest scorer, which is unlikely given that he basically fights quirkless to, or the threat was simply there to motivate you all to not fall behind."

Izuku neglected to mention that he knew that Eraser was fully prepared to expel any number of them who proved that they didn't have the potential to be a hero, test scores be damned.

No one had a response to that.

Uraraka broke the silence. "Wow! your quirk really is cool!”

Izuku blinked. They were supposed to be the best and brightest of their age and they seriously thought that Izuku had used his fake quirk to make that simple deduction. The next generation of heroes

were doomed.

He couldn't help but laugh.

The others share a confused look but didn't say anything. Maybe if they thought he was mad they would leave him alone.

Once he had caught his breath, Iida started talking again, clearly not having learnt from last time that Izuku was in no mood to have his conduct corrected. "Even if you knew the test was fake you should still address our teacher as sensei, not Eraser. It is disrespectful." The chopping arms were back.

Izuku had reached his socialisation limit. Time to make an escape.

"I'll start calling him sensei as soon as he tells me to. Anyways I should go get some food, see you guys in class."

He didn't give them a chance to reply, simply got up and left without a backwards glance.

There was only 15 minutes of the lunch hour left by the time Izuku left the cafeteria and he wasn't prepared to face any judgment from Eraser for going back to the teacher's lounge after one conversation so he resigned himself to simply going back to the 1-A classroom to wait out the rest of the time. Maybe he could finish his nap from earlier.

Izuku took his time on his walk back, not wanting it to appear that he had been there the whole of lunch by the time Mic came in for his English class. That information was sure to make its way back to Eraser as soon as the class was over.

He spent his time poking his head into the various rooms off corridors and making note of good spots he could use to hide in the future. As he vaulted over the railing of the stairs, he noticed that this particular stairwell had a door covering the under stair area, unlike every other staircase he had come across so far. He assumed it was intended simply as a storage cupboard but due to the obnoxious size of everything in the school, the door was tall enough that Izuku could enter it without having to duck.

His curiosity got the better of him and he pulled the door open.

Startled purple eyes met his.

"S-sorry" Izuku winced at his stutter, he was normally so careful not to

let it happen. He didn't need anything else making him look more vulnerable to strangers.

The boy didn't say anything.

"I was just exploring when I noticed this cupboard and thought I'd see what was inside. I didn't think anyone else would be here. I'll leave now."

Great. Now he was rambling.

Izuku was just about to close the door and hope he never ran into the boy again after this embarrassing performance when the boy finally seemed to snap out of his shock at being discovered.

"Wait" a quiet voice said. "You can stay if you want"

There was a beat of silence as they both considered each other before Izuku nodded. He pulled the door closed and sat down on the floor opposite the boy. He figured that this was probably a better place to wait out the rest of lunch than the classroom anyways.

Izuku studied the boy who had gone back to scrolling on his phone, completely ignoring Izuku's presence. He looked tired, Izuku noticed now he was looking closer. There were dark bags under both eyes. His purple hair looked like it hadn't seen a brush in days at least, and there were faint scars around his mouth, running up to his cheeks. Izuku narrowed his eyes at this observations but said nothing, waiting to see if his new companion would start a conversation. He didn't. The boy seemed perfectly content to simply share his hiding space with a compete stranger, no questions asked.

Izuku cursed his own curiosity.

"I'm Izuku Midoriya from Class 1-A."

The boy looked up. "Hitoshi Shinso. 1-C"

"Why are you hiding out here Shinso-kun?"

A wry smile crossed Shinso's face. "I could ask you the same question"

Touché. Clearly this kid didn't want to engage in small talk with him and Izuku had to grudgingly respect the want to not answer personal questions, given that he had spent the whole morning avoiding the same. His burning curiosity towards this strange boy would just have

to wait.

They spent the rest of the lunch hour in silence.

When the bell rang, Shinso pulled himself up off of the floor and made to leave, sparing Izuku a nod in place of a goodbye and left. Izuku remained where he was for a few minutes contemplating the boy. There was something achingly familiar about the way he held himself, like he was trying to take up as little space as physically possible, that reminded Izuku of his younger self. He made a mental note to ask Eraser and Mic if they knew anything about him when they got home tonight.

Finally deciding that he had wasted enough of class time, he pushed himself up and walked leisurely to his the 1-A classroom. Apologising to Mic in English for being late. Living with his English teacher did have some benefits after all.

Chapter End Notes

> Thank you for reading!
>
> Please let me know if you spot any spelling/grammar mistakes so I can fix them. Also what did you think of the start of season 8? I don't have anyone to talk to about it irl

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

> An expulsion, and Izuku accidentally reveals too much to his new friends.
> Cw: brief mention of a panic attack

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Shouta was fed up. After three days of school and still having a full class of twenty, he had gotten his hopes up that this would be the year he would finally see a full class through to graduation. It wasn't that he *wanted* to expel students, even if a smaller class would mean he would have less headaches and more naps. No. He just considered it an unnecessary cruelty to allow students with no real prospects of being a hero to continue down the arduous path. Better to direct them to line of work they would be more suited for early on. But so far his entire class had shown promise, the creativity to use their quirks in a variety of situations, and most importantly the drive to be a hero. But all the drive in the world wouldn't make up for the multiple counts of sexual harassment that had been reported to him.

So he was on his way to Nezu's office to deal with the situation.

When they had arrived home after the first day and his Problem Child had informed him of what he had overheard in the changing room, Shouta had resolved to talk to the boy about it. The next day he had pulled Mineta aside after homeroom and given him a stern verbal warning that he would be expelled if he heard of any more harassment towards his female classmates. The boy had seemed cowed at that and Shouta had hoped that would be the end of the matter. Teenage boys did sometimes let their hormones control their actions after all and during the quirk test Mineta had demonstrated his ability to come up with creative uses for his unique quirk.

Just a day after he had issued that warning however, the girls from his homeroom had come to his classroom together. They had reported all that Mineta had done to them in their two days at UA and he had assured them that it would be handled. He would not allow his students to be continually harassed under his watch so Mineta had to go.

He didn't bother knocking when he reached Nezu's door, just pushed it open and let himself in unannounced.

"Ah Aizawa, come in. Good of you to join us for this meeting."

He was disgruntled to note that Mineta was already seated opposite Nezu's desk, looking slightly confused. Clearly Nezu hadn't bothered to inform him why he had been called there, instead waiting for Shouta to show up to do it. The little rat looked way too happy about this whole thing.

"Mineta, do you have any idea why you've been called here?" Shouta asked, taking his place standing against the wall behind Nezu's desk as he did so

The boy shook his head.

Shouta took a breath. Contrary to what his reputation would suggest, he didn't enjoy doing this.

'Minoru Mineta, you are hereby expelled from UA. Once we are done here I will escort you to the classroom so you can clear out your desk and then escort you off campus. Please note that once you have left your student ID will be deactivated and you will not be permitted back on school grounds."

"WHAT? You can't expel me for no reason, what grounds do you have?"

"Actually, if you had read the student handbook you would know that at UA, we do things differently. Homeroom teachers do have the authority to expel any student from their class at any time, no reason needed." Nezu interjected cheerfully.

Shouta shot the rat a look but otherwise ignored him, keeping his attention on his former student. "As Principle Nezu so helpfully reminded us, I don't have to give you a reason, but in the interest of education I will tell you. Sexual harassment has no place in any classroom, let alone one of the heroics classes. Take this as the last lesson I will teach you, stop objectifying your female peers otherwise you will face worse consequences than expulsion."

Mineta was crying now, spluttering out both half hearted apologies and protests to his treatment.

Shouta nodded his thanks to Nezu before walking over to the door and

holding it open. "Come on Mineta, time to go."

He was grateful to his forethought to have this meeting after school hours had finished because no one past them in the corridors on their way back to the 1-A classroom. The boy followed as if in a daze, still quietly crying but seemingly resigned to his fate. The very least he could offer the boy was that no one witnessed his walk of shame out of the school.

As it was only the second day of school, it only took Mineta minutes to clear out the inside of his desk and a quiet walk through the school later he was out of the front gates.

Mineta walked off without a word to Shouta.

He watched him go as far as the corner before heading back into the school to meet Hizashi and Izuku. He was tired and just wanted to go home. While the kid's behaviour was vile and he didn't regret the course of action he had taken to protect his other students, he also couldn't help but feel that he had failed the kid somehow.

He collapsed onto the sofa next to Hizashi as soon as he reached the teacher's lounge where they had waited for him. The room was completely empty other than his small family so he allowed himself to melt into his husband's side. Izuku had glance up from his phone as he entered but quickly looked back down, giving them at least a semblance of privacy.

"Is it done?" Hizashi started gently carding his fingers through Shouta's hair, knowing how much he hated this part of his job as homeroom teacher.

Shouta nodded, saying nothing but leaning into his husband's hand.

"Come on then Shou, lets go home."

He allowed himself to be guided back to the car and once they were home, Izuku immediately retreated to his bedroom to have a nap before he went out tonight as Verdant. When they had first taken him in, he had threatened to run away if they didn't let him keep up his vigilante work so they had compromised. He was allowed to join in on Eraserhead's patrols as long as he got enough sleep and kept his grades up. Shouta had justified it to himself that if Izuku was going to go out fighting villains anyways he was safer with a Pro hero there to supervise, and *technically* it wasn't vigilantism because Izuku wasn't using a quirk. Call it extracurricular training.

Under normal circumstances, he would also head straight to bed but today he followed Hizashi into the bathroom after dropping off his sleeping bag and capture weapon in their bedroom. He notice that his husband's hearing aids were already on the bathroom counter, and he was already working on brushing his hair down from the ridiculous updo he wore. Shouta buried his head in Hizashi's neck and signed *"I really hoped I could keep a whole class this year."*

He heard the hairbrush being placed on the side and then Hizashi's arms were around him. "I know Shou" he whispered. Once Shouta lifted his face from Hizashi's neck he switched to signing *"You couldn't afford to let him hurt any of your other students though. I know you feel like you failed him but you only knew the kid for two days. Cut yourself some slack, the other adults in that kid's life failed his by letting him think that treatment of women is ok."*

His husband truly knew him so well. How lucky he was to have this man love him of all people.

"Plus" Hizashi added after pausing for a moment "*you couldn't afford always add someone from gen-ed to your class if you really want twenty kids. We both know they make the best heroes"* He smiled cheekily and Shouta couldn't help but smile with him.

"Thank you, 'Zashi" he signed before pecking him on the lips and then retreating to allow him to finish his hair. "*I'll see you when I wake up for patrol"*

"Sleep well Shou"

Shouta flopped onto their bed as soon as he entered the room, pausing only briefly to pick up the black cat that was curled up on the bed so he didn't accidentally sit on him. The cat simply curled back up next to him once he had stopped moving and they were both asleep before long.

The next day, when he arrived at his classroom for homeroom it only took the 30 seconds to be silent. Good. They were learning.

He noticed the kids shooting looks towards Mineta's empty seat. He had warned Izuku to not tell his friends about the fate of their missing classmate before he arrived and could break the news to them himself. It was Iida who broached the subject before Shouta could even think to bring it up. Almost as soon as he had reached the podium Iida's hand shot into the air.

"Yes, Iida. You have a question?"

"Excuse me Aizawa-sensei, but do you know where Mineta is today? I'd like to apologise on his behalf if he's running late, and I will take notes for him if he has an excused absence today."

Shouta sighed.

"This information is not to leave this classroom you understand?" He said sharply, waiting to see everyone nod in agreement before continuing. "Mineta had been expelled. If any of you see him on school grounds again, please don't speak to him and come and find myself, or another member of staff immediately."

The class erupted into noise. To Shouta's surprise, no one seemed particularly upset about the news. He had expected the boy to have had at least one friend amongst the class but apparently it wasn't only the girls and Izuku that had been put off by his behaviour.

"Thank you Sensei!" Ashido shouted at him before he activated his quirk to shut them up again.

"I must repeat that this news is not to leave this room. You have battle training with All Might this afternoon so make sure to remember to pick up your hero costumes from the support department, they are all finished now. Do whatever you want for the rest of homeroom, if you need something, please do hesitate to wake me up."

With that he pulled his sleeping bag up and promptly fell asleep under his desk.

Izuku groaned, slamming his head down onto his desk and feigning sleep soon as Eraser announced that they had free time until their first class. He could hear the class shuffling around him, pulling desks together so groups could sit together and chat, or work together on homework more comfortably. He only raised his head again when he had deemed the noise to have died down enough to indicated that everyone had settled with their friends enough to not want to move again just to bother him.

Looking around the room, clear friendship groups had already formed within the class. Uraraka, Asui and Iida were still sat together as they had been at lunch on that first day, but now Tokoyami had also joined them, sitting just close enough to listen and occasionally input into the conversation without committing himself to the group entirely. The

three Izuku had sat with on the first day had clearly decided that that one conversation meant they were his friends now, and had attempted small talk with him during breaks and classes since. Izuku didn't know how he felt about it, but had decided to humour them when they did. It was strangely nice knowing he could go and sit with them and be included if he wanted to be.

The newly dubbed 'Bakusquad' was all gathered around a very angry looking Bakugo's desk, while Yaoyorozu and Jirou had their heads bent over one of Mic's homework sheets from yesterday at the back of the room. Everyone seemed to be making the most of the free socialisation time with one notable exception.

Todoroki sat completely still at his desk. His usually carefully blank expression held a hint of what Izuku thought was bewilderment as he looked around the classroom. He was the only person, excluding Izuku himself, who hadn't moved from their desk or had anyone join them at theirs.

Izuku jumped at the chance to talk to the mysterious boy in relative privacy.

He wandered over to the boy while making eye contact, giving Todoroki time to make it known if he didn't want to engage in conversation. While he looked slightly like a startled meerkat, he made no move to escape so Izuku took that as an invitation to perch himself on top of Sato's desk and spark up conversation.

"So, is Endeavor as terrible of a father as his reputation would suggest?"

Todoroki's meerkat impression became more impressive and his mouth opened slightly in surprise at the no nonsense opener.

Izuku had to laugh at the expression on his face which seemed to snap Todoroki out of his shocked trance.

"You're not very good at conversations are you?" He asked.

Now it was Izuku's turn to look confused.

"My sister always tells me that I need to start conversations with small talk before getting to the main point" he clarified. "And yes he is."

"Well I think small talk is a waste of time"

Todoroki nodded thoughtfully. "Why did you come and talk to me? You've avoided talking to everyone else"

Straight to the point and observant. Izuku could begrudgingly feel himself start to like this boy, him being unfairly pretty and seemingly hating Endeavor just as much as he did were definitely helping factors too.

"I just wanted to know about Endeavor really." Izuku shrugged, "plus you look like you won't pester me questions I don't want to answer about the quirk test like the rest of them would. I can practically see them itching to ask every time we have free time, its been such a pain to try and avoid them." Izuku sighed dramatically.

Todoroki looked thoughtful at that. "You don't want me asking you questions but you want me to answer yours?"

"My thoughts get away from me sometimes" Izuku explained sheepishly, Todoroki definitely had him there, "if I ask something you don't want to answer just say, I won't pry I promise."

Todoroki's face softened slightly, he previously guarded expression shifting into something a bit more open.

"Can I ask you a other question then?"

Todoroki nodded.

"Why are you here at UA then if you hate your dad so much? If it was me, I think I would have written off heroism entirely" Izuku didn't mention that was almost exactly what had happened to him. Failed by a hero who was supposed to protect you, only to end up on the hero course anyways. He knew he had Eraser and Mic to thank for the fact that he hadn't died in a back alley somewhere years ago, and he wondered if this boy had someone who had helped him similarly.

Just as Izuku was thinking that he wasn't going to get an answer and maybe that he should apologise for overstepping, Todoroki finally replied. "My mum. She told me I could be a greater hero than my father"

"So that's why you never use your fire?"

Todoroki looked up again in surprise. "How did you..?"

"Oh my quirk. I can analyse people's quirks. Their strengths,

limitations, etc." Izuku explained. "I figured you had at least some sort of fire quirk given your colouring"

"I thought you didn't want to talk about your quirk?" He shot back dryly, quirking an eyebrow at Izuku.

Izuku paused, apparently when relaxed and not being a loner, Todoroki could be a bit of a sassy bitch. "How do you know I'm telling you the truth? I might be lying to avoid talking about my quirk." He said coyly. Maybe this was pushing it too far but Izuku was having the most fun he'd had in a while. So what if Todoroki figured out his secret, he wouldn't tell anybody. Probably.

"Why would anyone lie about their quirk?"

The bell rang then, signifying the end of homeroom. Izuku hopped lightly off Sato's desk. He shrugged at Todoroki, "You tell me."

Morning classes passed in a blur. Despite knowing that his guardian's would vehemently disagree with him, Izuku secretly thought that one of the best things about living with his teachers was that he didn't have to pay as much attention in classes. They would grumble every time he asked them to recap a lesson, but would never actually let him fall behind, not when it was their idea to enrol him in the first place. This left Izuku a lot of time free in class to work on his new analysis notebook that was dedicated to his peers and teachers at UA.

Izuku was half way through his page on Yaoyorozu's quirk, the last of his classmates he had yet to do, when the bell rang for lunch Not wanting to loose his train of thought, he grabbed his notebook and pencil and rushed to the hiding place he unofficially shared with Shinso. They had both spent every lunch since that first one sitting in silence together in the space under the stairs. Neither one of them ever started a conversation, each having too much respect for the other's privacy. They understood that they both had reasons for hiding away there every day and the quiet comradery they had developed was nice.

He had beaten Shinso there today. Over the last four days, Shinso had always already been settled in by the time Izuku arrived, he must have rushed more than he thought in an effort to not loose his train of thought. Izuku immediately threw himself down onto the floor in his usual spot and pulled out his notebook, continuing to scribble down his observations about Yaoyorozu's Creation. On each page he made sure to leave plenty of space to continue to add notes as the year went

on and they all developed their quirks.

Izuku was so absorbed in his thoughts that he literally jumped to his feet when Shinso opened the door and Izuku counted himself lucky that the ceilings were so high in here because he did not want to explain that injury to Eraser. He would never live it down. Shinso gave him a strange look but said nothing, just smirking slightly before taking his normal place on the floor and pulling out his phone. As usual he had nothing to eat.

As his adrenaline wore off, Izuku sat himself back down and continued where he had left off, rubbing out the line he had accidentally drawn across the page in his fright. As he was getting back into his quirk analysis zone, he was interrupted once again.

"What on earth are you doing?"

The sudden voice in the otherwise silent cupboard made Izuku jump again, albeit slightly less dramatically this time.

Izuku glared at Shinso as he rubbed out yet another line from his page.

And Shinso laughed at him. The fucking audacity.

"But seriously what are you doing? You were mumbling so fast I couldn't understand a word. It's like you were possessed."

Izuku intensified his glare, channelling Eraser, despite not having a quirk to back it up. Shinso didn't seem fazed and eventually Izuku relented, sliding his notebook over so the other boy could see. He flipped through a few pages before looking up.

"Quirk analysis?"

Izuku nodded.

"Can you do that for any quirk?"

"Yeah, what do you have in mind?"

"Could you do mine?" Shinso said, sliding the book back to Izuku. "I want to be a hero but my quirk was useless against those stupid robots at the entrance exam. I need to know how to improve so I can impress someone at the sports festival to get moved onto the hero course. I know they very rarely move people but Eraserhead managed it when

he was at school and now he's a pro"

That was the most Izuku had heard Shinso say in one go since they had met. "You like Eraserhead? You know he teaches here right? You should go tell him he's your favourite. He'd love that" Izuku thought for a moment, imagining Eraser's face if anyone told him he was their favourite hero. He grinned "In fact please let me be there when you do."

"You seem to know Eraserhead pretty well." Shinso observed sounding nonchalant but Izuku noticed a faint blush staining his cheeks.

Izuku waved off the comment. "Not the point, although we will come back to the fact that you're an Eraserhead fanboy." It was Shinso's turn to glare at him. Izuku just laughed again and flipped to an empty page in his notebook. "I do need to know what your quirk is before I can analyse it"

Shinso visibly sobered at that. "It's a villain's quirk." he said quietly, curling in on himself even more.

"No quirk is inherently villainous. Try me, at least you have a quirk."

It was out of his mouth before he could catch himself and Izuku cursed himself internally. What was he thinking? First he had almost let his quirklessness slip to Todoroki and now he had outright told Shinso. Twice in one day was not a good track record, at this rate the whole school would know and he'd be kicked out of the hero course for sure and all Mic and Eraser had done for him wouldn't been a waste. Maybe they would even be fired given that they had knowingly lied on his application to get him accepted?"

"Hey, breathe with me." A hand landed on his shoulder and started rubbing gentle circles on his back. When had Shinso gotten so close? For that matter when had he started hyperventilating? He tried to focus on what Shinso was saying.

"…that's it. Breathe in. And out. Good job, and again" Izuku focused on timing his breathing with Shinso's and few a few minutes the only sound that could be heard were Shinso's gentle affirmations and their breathing.

"Can I use my quirk on you? It will help"

Izuku responded without thinking. He nodded, "yes-"

Suddenly his mind was blank, no thoughts, no panic, just a blissful white space where his overactive brain usually whirred.

As abruptly as the feeling started, it was gone.

"Thank you." Izuku said when he felt like he could speak again. "I'm sorry, I just panicked, you can't tell anyone that I'm quirkless. I'll get expelled."

Shinso nodded. "Don't worry, I wouldn't dream of telling anybody. My quirk is Brainwash by the way, I've found that it kind of pushes a reset button on your brain. It's like turning it off and on again.

"How did you know you could do that?"

"I'm in foster care." Shinso admitted. "You'd be surprised at how often new kids have panic attacks at night. Sometimes I get in trouble if my foster parents find out but its worth it to help."

Huh. Apparently they had more in common than Izuku first thought. "Shinso, your quirk isn't villainous. You're already using it to help people like a real hero."

"Call me Hitoshi." Shinso, no, Hitoshi said with a gentle smile.

"You can call me Izuku then. Now, tell me everything about your quirk." Izuku picked up his notebook again and poised the pencil over the page, ready to write down every detail. "Let's get you into the hero course"

Hitoshi laughed and started talking. He hadn't moved back over to 'his' side of the cupboard, instead opting to lean against the wall next to Izuku, close enough that their arms brushed against each other as Izuku wrote.

They passed the rest of the lunch break in this fashion and Izuku's mouth was hurting from smiling too much. If this is what having a friends was like, he decided that he rather liked it. When the bell rang, and Hitoshi stood, stretching his back out and went to leave after bidding Izuku goodbye as normal.

He was stopped by a hand grabbing his arm.

"If you're serious about joining the hero course, meet me at the 1-A classroom after school on Monday." Izuku said cryptically. "See you tomorrow!"

With that Izuku left the room deep in thought, and made towards the classroom to pick up his 'hero' costume from Eraser's desk before heading to the training field. He had three days to convince Eraser that Hitoshi was the perfect student to join 1-A now that there was a spot free and it wouldn't be easy. He needed all the time he could get to put his plan together.

Chapter End Notes

> Hope you enjoyed! Please let me know if you spot any spelling/ grammar mistakes.
>
> The next chapter will be up next Sunday, and I'm currently midway through writing chapter 5 as of posting this and I'm pretty sure it'll end up being 6 chapters total

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

> The class's first battle training and Izuku has a tense reunion with a long forgotten friend.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Izuku was the first to arrive in the changing room. He figured that the detour the rest of his classmates had to take to the support department to collect their costumes had slowed them down. He pulled out his costume case to begin going through the pieces, inspecting them.

After many arguments with Eraser, he had been allowed to keep the design of his hero costume the same as what he wore as Verdant. He had argued that there were only a few videos of Verdant floating about online and all of them were so dark it was unreasonable to think that someone could recognise his costume in broad daylight. Besides, how many people expected a notorious vigilante to only be 15 and enrolled in a hero school. Izuku was relatively sure his identity would remain a secret.

Fortunately for him, rational arguments were a very effective way of getting his way with Eraser, the proviso had been that he allow the support department to upgrade the suit.

It wasn't that Izuku didn't trust that the support department knew what they were doing, it was just that he was very… particular about his costume.

The black cargo trousers that tucked perfectly into his red, steel-toe capped combat boots, and undershirt seemed pretty much identical to his old ones in design, just made that out of sturdier material. Izuku was pleased to note that he still had full range of motion when he put them on. Next came the arm guards and his utility belt. He could feel from the weight of the belt that the pouches had been fully stocked with his requested smoke bombs, flash-bangs, and medical supplies. The arm guards attached to black leather gloves and each one had tranquilliser darts circling his wrist, and an empty space where a small dagger could be strapped to the inside of his forearms. Izuku wasn't surprised that the knives hadn't been provided, deemed too lethal for

a hero. He did appreciate that his designer had still left him the option to add his own though. A dark green and black jacket followed. It was slightly more fitted than his previous one in the body, while the sleeves were loose at the wrist, allowing for easy access to the tools attached to his arms, and a hood that was just large enough that it would effectively obscure the top portion of his face without being so big that it obstructed his vision. The hood along with the silvery looking mask that covered his mouth and nose, and had a built in gas mask, did the job to completely hide his face from view.

Izuku had allowed himself to add short tails to the back of the jacket that extended down to his knees. He was a hero now after all, he figured he could add a little bit of flare to his costume if he wanted.

The last piece remaining in his costume case was the part he was the most excited for.

His staff.

Previously, he had been making his own using whatever piece of metal piping he could get his hands on but they were cumbersome to carry when he was climbing and jumping across rooftops. Plus they inevitably bent, or even outright snapped on a few memorable occasions. Even after moving in with Eraser and Mic, they couldn't commission a new weapon for him without acknowledging that they were supporting an illegal vigilante.

The new staff was collapsible, with a designated spot on his belt for it to attach to when he wanted his hands free, and it was made of carbon-fibre, resulting in it being both lighter and stronger than any he had made for himself.

He swung it around a few times, testing the balance and length, and he grinned. It was perfect. Light enough that he felt like he could use in an extended fight without getting too tired, but heavy enough that its weight gave it enough momentum that he could keep it spinning with little effort.

Examining himself in the changing room's mirror, Izuku was very satisfied with the effect. It was similar enough that he still felt like himself, like Verdant, but it had been improved in every way. The support department really had outdone themselves, Izuku ought to send them a thank you note.

He made a mental note to add his old knives to the costume case when they got home that evening, he wouldn't need them for training

after all but the lack of weight did leave his arms feeling strangely bare. The rest of his classmates had filtered in while he was changing but they were all too busy complimenting each other's costumes, showing off their designs, and talking animatedly about how excited they were for their first class with All Might to pay any attention to Izuku. His costume wasn't flashy like theirs, it was designed to blend in at night after all.

He didn't wait around to see how long it would take for their attention to turn to him.

Instead of heading straight out to the observation platform where they had been told to meet for the class, Izuku lingered in the shadows of one of the alcoves off of the corridor. He did not want to be alone with All Might under any circumstance. If he could get through this class without having to talk to the man it would be a win in his book.

Izuku waited until he saw some of his classmates leave the changing room and head outside before he made to follow them. He attached himself to the back of Uraraka's group in an attempt to draw even less attention to himself.

It was better for everyone if All Might didn't recognise him as that quirkless kid he had told to give up on his dreams of being a hero almost three years ago. As the Number One Hero, it was unlikely. He saved hundreds of people after all, Izuku couldn't have been more than a blip on his radar. However, it wasn't worth the risk just for the satisfaction of rubbing the fact that he had made it onto the UA hero course without a quirk.

Eraser and Mic had both repeatedly warned him to keep his head down around All Might but Izuku personally thought that they were severely overestimating his intelligence. How he had thought it appropriate to leave a clearly depressed, quirkless child alone on a locked roof after crushing his dreams was laughable to Izuku. The man clearly lacked all common sense.

Izuku couldn't be too mad. That single interaction with All Might was the reason that he had become Verdant after all.

Once everyone had gathered, All Might began to explain the exercise.

Izuku only half listened. It was a fairly straightforward two vs two matchup. Instead he pulled his notebook out from where he had stashed it in one of his trouser pockets. Up to this point, they had only done fairly standard training to expand the scope of what they

thought they could do with their quirks.

This was the first time they were being placed into an actual combat scenario and Izuku was excited to see how everyone would perform. From experience he knew that practising new moves in a training scenario was all well and good, but once you got onto the battlefield your body would fall back on what was most familiar. He would be ready to breakdown each battle to see how each quirk could have been utilised more effectively.

Really, Eraser had chosen his fake quirk exceptionally well.

When lots were drawn for partners Izuku put his notebook down. He was interested to see how they would be divided up, now that there was only 19 of them.

All Might clearly hadn't planned for the class to have an odd number of students. His solution was to simply announce that one group would be a three, with no balances to make it fairer on the team they were against. Despite his already low opinion of the hero, Izuku still managed to find himself surprised at the sheer incompetence of the man as he knew for a fact that Eraser had informed him of the change in class size last night, giving him plenty of time to change or adapt his lesson plan. Apparently that was too much to ask of the Number One Hero.

By the time everyone had been put into their groups, Izuku was raring to go. Eraser had decided that it was best to cut patrol the previous night short so that he would be rested for this class. Izuku was so determined to prove to All Might that he was wrong, even if the man himself couldn't know, that he had hardly complained. Now though, he was itching to try out his new staff.

He was in luck.

He and Uraraka were to fight against Bakugo and Iida in the first round.

Bakugo turned to glare at them as soon as it was announced. Instead of looking away, Izuku glared right back until Bakugo stalked away to meet up with Iida and set up the bomb. He thought there was something strangely familiar about the blond but he couldn't quite put his finger on what it was. Deciding to worry about that later, Izuku went to join Uraraka where she was already waiting outside of the building.

They had 5 minutes to strategise and Izuku planned to make the most out of it.

By the time the alarm rung to signal they they could begin, Izuku was feeling confident. He and Uraraka ran into the building together before splitting off.

The plan was simple. Bakugo had already proven himself to be a hot-head, so Izuku planned to lure him into a fight while Uraraka located the bomb, and presumably Iida. Once Bakugo had been subdued, then Izuku would go to rejoin Uraraka and they would capture the bomb together. He had given her his utility belt on account of her hero costume having no pockets so she could set off a smoke bomb and hide if she was spotted prematurely, and with any luck Iida would assume they were together. He had only kept a few smoke and flash bombs for himself, along with his tranquilliser darts and of course his staff.

For now, Izuku's job was to head up the main staircase, making as much noise as possible to attract attention so Uraraka could slip around to the secondary staircase at the back of the building.

It wasn't long before he heard Bakugo's heavy footsteps coming from the floor above him, heading towards the stairs. Izuku braced himself between the corridor walls, pushing off both to climb up so he was situated above the door to the stairwell. He liked to start fights on his own terms, usually dropping in on villains from roofs, finding that the element of surprise meant that he could subdue them before they could even activate their quirk and he wasn't going to let the fact that they were inside change his strategy.

"I've got Bakugo on the second floor" he informed Uraraka through their comms, "he came down so check the floors above for the bomb." He waited for her confirmation that she hadn't run into anything so far before muting his end. It wasn't a comfortable position to sit in but fortunately he didn't have to wait there for to long before Bakugo came through the door.

Izuku counted to three once he had passed underneath him before dropping, pulling his staff out of his pocket and extending it to full length as he did so. By the time he hit the ground, he was poised to strike. Under normal circumstances, against a real villain, Izuku would aim his initial strike for the head but he didn't want to get in trouble for seriously injuring a classmate when he had other options.

Landing in a crouch, Izuku hit the back of Bakugo's knees hard. Hard enough to make them collapse under him.

As he fell forwards, Izuku aimed a kick at the centre of his back to send him stumbling away so Izuku was outside the range of his explosions once again. If he had calculated right, his staff when held right at the end, should just about have more range than Bakugo's explosions.

Bakugo recovered quickly. He caught himself using the force of an explosion against the ground to throw himself back towards Izuku, twisting in midair as he went. Izuku dodged just in time as Bakugo swung his right hand towards Izuku's face, palm already glowing with a building explosion.

"Are you trying to kill me?" Izuku shouted over the blast. It had missed his head by mere inches and he was really regretting not just knocking Bakugo out cold with his first swing. So much for not injuring anyone too much.

Bakugo didn't reply.

Izuku rolled out from underneath the blast and came up behind Bakugo, raising his staff to take another swing at him while he was still off balance from the failed attack. The staff connected with Bakugo's ribs and Izuku took the opportunity to back up down the corridor. He kept his staff twirling from hand to hand with practised ease so Bakugo couldn't use his explosions to launch himself towards Izuku without risking hitting the carbon-fibre pole.

They glared at each other from across the corridor as Izuku continued to back away.

"Why are you running away useless Deku? Still waiting for a hero to come and save you? You're pathetic."

Izuku froze, his staff falling still to his side.

All at once it hit him why Bakugo had felt so familiar. He had been so preoccupied with avoiding his classmates he had barely bothered to learn their family names, let alone their given ones. Katsuki Bakugo. Kacchan.

They had been playing together when Izuku's life had crumbled and he had never seen his childhood best friend again. Until now apparently.

Izuku wanted to laugh at the irony but all he could manage was a quiet "Kacchan?"

Bakugo wasted no time in taking advantage of his surprise. He launched himself forwards using the explosions from his left hand, repeating the same right hand swing he had performed earlier but this time pulling the pin on is grenade like arm guards.

All Izuku could do was dive to the side and throw his arms up to protect his face.

The explosion was enormous. The force of it flung Izuku into the wall. He could feel the heat of the blast through his costume and mentally thanked whoever had decided to make his costume fire proof.

He laid still, feigning defeat and using the time to catch his breath.

When it sounded like Bakugo was close enough, he swung his staff across the ground in an attempt to swipe Bakugo's feet out from under him. The awkward angle meant that there was no force behind the hit, but that wasn't Izuku's goal. As Bakugo looked down to dodge the hit, Izuku reached into his pocket and pulled out a smoke bomb, pulling the pin in the same motion. He let it drop as smoke began to pour out of it.

Izuku scrambled to his feet as silently as possible, wincing as he straightened his back. He was going to have a bruise from being thrown into the wall. Bakugo was mere feet away from him, setting of small explosions in an attempt to illuminate the area around him with little success.

Under the smoke cover, Izuku regained his distance from Bakugo, more on guard now that he knew what those gauntlets could do. He figured that since he only had one more shot left, he would most likely save it for when he knew he had a guaranteed shot. Glancing back, Bakugo appeared not to have moved. Evidently he was waiting for the smoke to clear. Izuku grinned, he could use that.

Just as he was reaching the edge of the smoke cloud, Izuku's radio crackled to life. "Midoriya? Are you ok? I heard that massive explosion just now."

Izuku checked back on the now thinning cloud of smoke. Bakugo would be coming after him again any second so he took a chance. He ran. Bakugo definitely heard him but it didn't matter, Izuku just needed to create enough distance that he could talk to Uraraka

without being overheard.

Once he deemed himself to be far enough away, he unmuted himself. "I'm fine Uraraka, don't worry. Have you found the bomb?"

"Yes, and Iida is guarding it as you expected but he's spotted me and, after that explosion, knows I'm alone."

"Ok. What's the location of the bomb? I'm going to lure Bakugo over so he's directly underneath you. Hide from Iida for now, he won't stray too far away from the bomb to follow you. When I tell you so, set off a couple of flashbangs and so he can see the light from a distance. Hopefully he'll think Bakugo had dealt with me and is coming back to help him so will leave an opening for you to capture the bomb."

"We're at the big room in the left corner of the building. Be safe Midoriya!" Her radio clicked off again as she muted herself. Izuku left his on, not trusting that he would have time to turn it back on later.

The plan hinged on a lot of big ifs. Izuku was counting on Bakugo being hot-headed enough to continue pursuing him, even now when the smarter decision would be to go and help his teammate. There was also no guarantee that Iida would fall for the fake out explosions with the flashbangs but it was the best he could do in the heat of the moment.

Izuku backtracked a short ways until he could hear Bakugo heading in his direction. He pulled out another smoke bomb and rolled it around the corner. His goal was simple: keep Bakugo blind while Izuku lead him where he wanted him.

Once the smoke was thick enough, Izuku rounded the corner, deliberately catching his staff on the wall as he did so. He heard Bakugo heading towards the sound.

Izuku grinned behind his mask, this would be too easy.

He made a game of it. Releasing smoke bombs when the cover from the last one was growing thin enough to give Bakugo a glimpse of his retreating back, letting him think he was running away from the fight. When the smoke was too thick to see, Izuku would 'accidentally' hit his staff against a wall, or noisily trip, allowing Bakugo to release an explosion over his head. As long as he stayed just within Bakugo's range, he found that the blond would follow him. If letting him think he was the one doing the hunting got him to do what Izuku wanted then all the better. Sometimes being seen as weak could be turned into

a weapon if you knew how, and Izuku had plenty of practice.

When they reached the back corner of the building, Izuku threw down his last smoke bomb in the doorway and took his place in the middle of the large room. As he had done before without any sign of his target's location, Bakugo stopped and waited for the smoke to clear.

Izuku waited too.

Once the smoke cleared, Bakugo grinned ferociously. "Are you done running, shitty Deku? There's no where else to go."

"I'm done" Izuku said, walking towards Bakugo "We're exactly where I wanted to be."

He didn't give Bakugo time to think over his words.

His staff lashed towards Bakugo's head in a carefully signalled attack. Bakugo threw his arms up to block the hit, the carbon-fibre connecting with the metal of his gauntlets with an almighty crash. Izuku used the recoil to whip his staff back in the opposite direction and hit Bakugo in the ribs on his undefended side before his had time to move. Bakugo returned the hit, exploding one hand and then the other on Izuku's shoulder and rib in quick succession.

Izuku stumbled, his staff clattered to the floor and Bakugo seized his advantage, bodily shoving Izuku to the floor by his already smouldering shoulder.

There was a moment of calm. Both boys stared each other down, daring each other to make the next move before Bakugo raised his left arm, already poised to pull the pin on his remaining gauntlet grenade. Izuku just continued to stare up at him, watching his eyes instead of his hand on the pin, calculating.

The tension broke in a single flurry of movement.

Bakugo pulled the pin.

"Uraraka, now!" Izuku shouted as he launched himself up towards the gauntlet. Bakugo's eyes widened as he realised Izuku had thrown himself closer to the blast, rather than away from it.

Izuku knocked the gauntlet upwards at the last second with one hand, the other connected with Bakugo's chest, pushing him backwards and away from the blast.

The last thing Izuku heard before he was buried under chunks of falling ceiling was Uraraka yelling his name through their comms.

Chapter End Notes

Hope you enjoyed!
This was my first time writing action scenes like this so sorry if it's not quite up to the usual quality but I had fun.

As always please let me know if you spot any spelling/grammar mistakes.
Next chapter will be up next Sunday!

Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

> In the aftermath of their first proper battle training, Izuku's secrets may not be as safe as he thought.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Shouta was irate.

How could All Might be so idiotic? The exercise should have been stopped as soon as Bakugo set off the first of his gauntlets in Izuku's face. He hates to think what would've happened if Bakugo had been paired off against anyone else, only Izuku's years of combat experience gave him the reflexes to dodge that attack.

Now his Problem Child was in the infirmary because a fucking ceiling got dropped on him and Shouta placed the blame squarely on All Might's shoulders. He would be having words to Bakugo about excessive use of force in training exercises but the kid wasn't to blame for All Might's frankly appalling lack of instruction, or sense to know when things had gone too far.

So, Shouta had been livid when he'd received a message on his break that Izuku had been carted off to Recovery Girl on a stretcher. As much as he wanted to to march down to the training ground right then and punch All Might in his stupid, grinning face, his Problem Child was his first priority.

He slammed through the doors to Recovery Girl's office with so much force that they slammed against the walls and bounced back, almost closing on him again.

"I would appreciate it if you didn't break my doors." Chiyo's voice came from behind the curtain that had been drawn around one of the beds.

Shouta ignored her. He crossed the room and pulled the curtain aside enough to let himself in.

"How is he?"

Izuku looked physically fine from what Shouta could see. He was unconscious and his hero costume was torn in places, with barely visible blood stains surrounding them, but the exposed skin seemed injury free. The entire left side of his costume and hair was charred from the first blast, and he still had bits of dust and plaster coating his body. Overall, it looked as though he had been through the wringer, but Chiyo's quirk had thankfully meant Izuku could walk away with no lasting damage.

"I've already healed him," she said, confirming his assessment, "he should be waking up soon."

Shouta collapsed into the chair next to the bed, suddenly exhausted, and rubbed his hands over his face. His Problem Child would be ok.

His musing was interrupted by Chiyo laughing softly at him. He looked up at her, too tired to give her a proper glare.

"What?"

"You really have gone soft on the boy haven't you? I've only ever seen you get like this when Hizashi is injured."

Shouta sighed. "He needs to stop thinking that he has to do everything himself before he gets more seriously hurt. I sometimes feel like I just enabled him to keep hurting himself by letting him come here."

Chiyo looked at him sympathetically. "I know that you doubt that you're doing what's best, but that's parenthood. Everyone second guesses themselves and you and Hizashi are doing everything you can to protect that boy. If you hadn't taken him in he would be out there in even more dangerous situations, at least here we can protect him."

"Thank you, Chiyo." Shouta said. He was grateful to the Recovery Hero, not just because of her words, but for her help when they had first taken Izuku in. He had found Izuku, just slightly too late for the fight, bleeding out from a large stab wound in his leg. Not knowing what else to do with a dying, underage vigilante, he had called Chiyo and she had healed him with no questions asked. She had also been the one to first suggest that he should take Izuku in. Hizashi had been bringing up the topic of potentially adopting a child for a long time but Shouta had put it off, doubting his ability to be a good role model for a child when he could barely take care of himself. When Chiyo had brought up the subject he had rejected the idea, but the more he thought about it. the more it seemed like the right thing to do. From what he already knew of Verdant, he wasn't much younger than his

students, and was already worryingly similar to Shouta himself at that age. Hizashi has been thrilled and Izuku had fit into their household with as much ease as could be expected from a traumatised 13 year old.

So Shouta had a lot to thank Chiyo for, including her tact. As soon as Izuku started moving, she excused herself and bustled off, giving them at least the illusion of privacy.

"S' not your fault, Eraser" Izuku slurred, trying to sit up. He gave up quickly, flopping back down onto the bed with a groan. "M' tired. What happened?"

"You heard all that then?" Shouta huffed out a laugh, "What am I going to do with you Problem Child? Bakugo dropped a ceiling on top of you and Recovery Girl used her quirk to patch you up, she warned that you'd be exhausted so you've got to stay here for the rest of the afternoon."

Izuku groaned. "I hate hospitals"

"I know, kid. But look at it this way, you get to stay here and nap for the rest of the afternoon, I'd love to be able to do that."

"Like you don't do that anyways." Izuku shot back.

Shouta sent him a withering glare, "don't push your luck Problem Child." He stood, stretching his back out. "Well unfortunately I've got a class to teach soon and I would expect that your classmates will be here to check up on you once their lesson finishes. From what I heard they were all quite worried about you."

Izuku groaned again even louder and Shouta didn't try to hide his smile as he turned to leave the room.

He was almost to the door when Izuku's voice rang out, echoing in the nearly empty room.

"Eraser?"

Shouta stopped, glancing back at Izuku over his shoulder.

"You and Mic are great parents, thank you for taking me in."

He had to blink back the tears that were threatening to spill out of his eyes at that, suddenly very glad he hadn't fully turned around. "Don't

mention it, Problem Child. Rest up now."

As Eraser had predicted, it wasn't long before Izuku heard what sounded like his whole class approaching the infirmary. He sighed but didn't call Recovery Girl over to get rid of them, better to let them get it out of their systems when they only had a few minutes to bother him before they had to get to their next class.

Slowly he pulled himself into a more upright position, wanting to at least be sitting up when he faced his classmates. While he appreciated that Recovery Girl's quirk had saved him more times than he would admit to anyone, it always made him feel like he had been hit by a truck afterwards. Izuku knew that he didn't get as much sleep as was recommended but even staying up all night as Verdant, and then spending a whole day at school never made him as tired as Recovery Girl's quirk did. He wanted to sleep for a week after this. Maybe he could convince Mic to convince Eraser to let him have the next day off of school.

It wasn't long after he had settled himself, and made a plan as to how he would use his three day weekend, that his classmates appeared in the doorway. Izuku was surprised to note that Todoroki was leading the rest of the group. Less surprisingly, Uraraka, Iida and Asui followed him closely; Izuku had expected to see them given their continued attempts befriend him. With the glaring exception of Bakugo, the rest of the class entered behind them, all wearing a mix of expressions ranging from worry to something that looked suspiciously like… awe?

Todoroki reached his bed first. "Are you ok, Midoriya? Bakugo went way too far." His usual monotone was coloured with worry.

Izuku felt his face heat up a little at the clear concern Todoroki showed for him. He didn't understand why Todoroki would care so much for him after one simple conversation, nor his own reaction to Todoroki's words. He was too tired to properly unpack all of *that,* instead he decided to write it off as a side effect of the concussion that Recovery Girl's quirk had somehow missed.

"Yeah I'm ok. Don't worry about me, Recovery Girl fixed me up. Shouldn't you guys be getting to class now?"

He knew it was a long shot given how persistent he knew his classmates were but he was hoping that they would take the hint and leave him alone. Outside of when it was necessary for class he had

never even spoken to most of them for Christ's sake, why did they seem so genuinely worried about him?

Despite his hope, the class ignored the hint. As soon as he verbally confirmed that he was alright, they started firing questions at him.

"Where did you learn to fight like that?"

"Can you teach me to use a staff too? It was so cool!"

"That fight was so manly, Bro."

"Has anyone ever told you that you fight like the vigilante Verdant?"

Izuku froze at the mention of his vigilante persona.

Most of these reactions had been expected. He had known that it would be clear to everyone that he had experience in fights as soon as they did any sort of real battle training, but had been hoping to play it off with the excuse that he had a martial arts background. What he didn't expect was for someone to connect hero-in-training Izuku Midoriya with Verdant, let alone so quickly.

It seemed that the rest of the class was just as shocked as Izuku at the comparison. They fell silent, all heads turning towards Tokoyami.

"Dude. Who's Verdant?" Kaminari whispered to Jiro from the back of the group. It seemed loud compared to the dead silence that had fallen over the room.

Jiro just shrugged, looking equally confused by the sudden tense atmosphere that had fallen over the group. There was a long stretch where it seemed like no one would answer. Surprisingly, it was Todoroki who spoke up first.

"Verdant showed up randomly a couple years ago. He typically goes after villains, but there has been evidence connecting him to a few cases that resulted in some minor heroes being stripped of their licenses because they were abusing their position. The heroes and police after him have a hard time identifying him because he has never shown any sign of using a quirk to fight. Even if they did capture him, they can’t charge him with vigilantism either because that requires illegal quirk use."

It was the most anyone had heard Todoroki say at once and somehow the silence grew thicker once he stopped talking. Izuku knew he had

to put a stop to this conversation before it went too far but it was like his thoughts were moving through syrup. Damn the side effects of Recovery Girl's quirk, and damn himself for stupidly thinking that no one would recognise him.

Izuku forced himself to look at Todoroki.

He was met with mismatched eyes staring at him with an inscrutable expression and Izuku saw the exact moment of realisation cross Todoroki's face.

He knew.

Fuck.

Izuku shook his head minutely at Todoroki, giving him his best pleading expression and hoping to every god that he knew of that the message would be received.

Apparently, the gods hated him.

In that same moment, Todoroki seemed to realise that everyone had shifted their attention from Tokoyami to him, giving him questioning stares and causing him to miss Izuku's silent plea for him to keep his mouth shut.

"That sounds like classified information dude" Kaminari said.

Todoroki simply shrugged, "Verdant once broke into my father's agency and now he's determined to be the one to arrest him."

Everyone seemed to accept that answer, not bothering to question how Todoroki had obtained classified police information from the Number Two Hero who definitely knew better than to share that information, even to family. Izuku noticed that his posture relaxed, seemingly relieved not to be the centre of attention anymore.

"I found it! Guys, look at this" Kirishima yelled in triumph.

Seemingly, while the conversation had been going on, Kirishima had been searching for a video of Verdant on his phone for the sake of those in the class who had never heard of Verdant before, and were still looking vaguely confused. Majority of the class crowded around the phone to see.

Izuku had the sudden urge to hide under the blanket and hope this all

would go away when he emerged. He knew that if he tried to stop them watching the video that would make him look even more suspicious. His hands were tied. Thankfully it seemed as though Todoroki had withdrawn from the conversation, seeming to not see a reason to out him. He could only hope that none of the rest of the class had enough reason to think that he actually *was* Verdant, given that he hadn't gone out of his way to speak to the rest of them.

Maybe he could still salvage this?

From the sound alone, Izuku knew which video Kirishima had pulled up; he had made a point of watching every video that got posted of him to keep tabs on how much the public knew. He secretly enjoyed stalking the online forums dedicated to discussions about Verdant's 'crimes' and identity, not that he would ever admit as much to anyone.

The video was short and grainy due to low light leaving Verdant nothing more than a dark shadow. He was fighting a man with some kind of quirk that allowed him to fire light beams that caused minor explosions on impact. A side effect seemed to be that his whole body emitted a glow as he charged his blasts which was illuminating the scene. This was the most popular Verdant video for a reason. All the others were so dark, nothing beyond a vague silhouette could be seen.

In the video, Verdant was twirling his staff around his body, landing well placed blows on the man while dodging all the blasts of light that were being shot at him. It was clear that Verdant was deliberately keeping close to the man so he couldn’t use his quirk much without risking catching himself in the blast as well. The proximity also emphasised how short Verdant was in comparison to the fully grown man he was fighting.

Eventually, the fight ended with Verdant weaving even closer to the man, seeming to brush a hand against his neck before ducking away again. Shortly after, the man passed out in a dead faint and Verdant disappeared back into the darkness as the man's quirk deactivated.

When the tinny sound emerging from the phone ended as the video cut off abruptly, Izuku braced himself as silence once again descended over the room.

“You do fight a lot like Verdant, Midoriya, kero” Ausi observed

Murmurs of agreement sounded throughout the class.

When Izuku dared to look back up to gauge the reactions of his

classmates he noticed that Todoroki was once again staring at him intensely. A quick sweep around the faces of his other classmates told him that none of them had managed to connect the dots quite yet.

Damage control time then.

Izuku forced himself to let out a sheepish laugh, bringing his hand up to scratch his head. “This is so embarrassing” he said quietly, knowing that it would draw the attention of all of his classmates in the quiet infirmary. “I know he’s not a hero but I really look up to Verdant. He never uses a quirk to fight which proved that I could do the same. He’s the reason I want to be a hero.”

He trailed off. Izuku knew the limits to his acting abilities, as long as he kept to vague half-truths he would be ok. No one needed to know that his inspiration for quirkless fighting had been Eraserhead, let alone the man himself. Izuku would never live it down at home if either of his guardians ever found that out.

The class seemed to buy it, nods of understanding rippling through the group. Apparently no one had seriously considered the idea that Izuku could have actually been Verdant if he was able to misdirect them that easily. A look at Tokoyami, standing slightly separate from the main group with his arms folded stoically across his chest, told Izuku that not everyone was quite so easily convinced.

Oh well. He could deal with a suspicious Tokoyami. At least he wasn’t likely to spread any rumours based on his suspicions.

Uraraka spoke up. “Don’t worry, Midoriya! I’m pretty sure that everyone here was inspired to be a hero by someone. No one is going to judge you just because your inspiration happens to not be a proper hero, he still saves people!”

A blush covered Izuku’s cheeks at the unintended compliment. It was nice to hear that people recognised and appreciated his work, even if they had only just found about his existence.

While she was far too cheery for how tense Izuku still felt, he couldn’t help the gratitude that washed over him at her comment. She had unknowingly done far more than he had to help convince their classmates that his embarrassment was genuine.

The bell suddenly rang, making several people jump. Jiro let out a small yelp of pain as Kaminari accidentally shocked her in his surprise.

Izuku laughed at the scene, feeling more relaxed around his classmates than he had all day. “You guys should be getting to class, you wouldn’t want to make Midnight have to come and get you.”

A few people shuddered at the thought of Midnight’s reaction if she was forced to track her class down. They rushed out, a chorus of ‘goodbyes’ and ‘get well soons’ following them out. Izuku couldn’t help but be touched at the amount of concern they had showed him. He was very aware that he’d been a bit of a prick so far, and vowed to make more of an effort to socialise with his classmates from then on.

Only Todoroki and Kirishima had remained at his bedside.

"You guys really should be getting to class too, you know?" The previous conversations had been emotionally draining enough, and quite frankly, Izuku just wanted to go to sleep now.

Todoroki said nothing. He stood, looking at Kirishima expectantly, clearly queuing the other boy to go first.

Kirishima took and breath, looking more nervous that Izuku had seen so far. "I wanted to apologise to you on Bakugo's behalf" he started.

Izuku blinked in surprise. He hadn't been expecting that. He had known the two were friends, but hadn't expected for Kirishima to already be so close to the blond that he felt that it was his responsibility to apologise for Bakugo's actions.

"He went too far today and he knows he did. I tried to get him to come with us to apologise to you himself but he refused. I-"

Izuku held his hand up, cutting Kirishima off. "You don't need to apologise for him."

"But-"

"No. You're his friend but you aren't responsible for his actions." Izuku interrupted again. Kirishima was kind to a fault, and Izuku really didn't want to see him get hurt because he kept taking on the guilt for his friend's actions. "I appreciate the thought but quite frankly I don't care about anything Bakugo does."

Kirishima visibly perked up. "Ok! Thank you Midoriya. Get better soon!" He said before rushing out of the room, seemingly concerned about being late to class now he had gotten that off of his chest. Izuku just hoped the redhead would heed his advice.

Todoroki had been standing completely silently by his bedside the whole time, now that they were alone Izuku shifted his attention back to him. He smirked up at the other boy, "so, I'd guess you've got a couple of minutes before Recovery Girl comes to kick you out and I'm sure you've got questions so ask away"

"You're Verdant." It wasn't a question.

Izuku nodded. "I am. What gave me away?"

"You're quirkless and you hate Endeavor."

Izuku had to laugh at the absurdity of the situation. In three years of acting as Verdant no one had figured him out. How had it taken less than a week for a boy with a frankly unfairly pretty face to have him spilling all of his secrets? "I really should break into Endeavor's place again. This is all his fault." Izuku muttered, more to himself than to Todoroki.

Apparently Todoroki heard him because he let out a quiet chuckle that had Izuku's heart doing a weird fluttery thing that he didn't want to examine the cause of. He was pretty sure that this was the first time he had heard Todoroki laugh since they had started school, and the irony that apparently the key was insulting Endeavor wasn't lost on him. Izuku decided then that it was a good thing that he had so many negative feelings about the man, because he wanted to see Todoroki smile more often.

He shook himself out of those distracting thoughts and forced himself to sober up. They could bond over their shared hatred of Endeavor later, for now they had a serious conversation to have. He met Todoroki's heterochromic eyes, "please don't tell anyone that I'm quirkless."

Todoroki shook his head sharply, seeming almost hurt that Izuku felt he had to tell him to keep quiet. "I won't. Can I ask who else knows?"

Despite only having know the other boy for a few days, Izuku had an inexplicable urge to trust him. He already knew the worst of his secrets, one more surely wouldn't make him change his mind to not go blabbing to the entire school.

"Mic and Eraser know everything. They took me in just over a year ago now, and Eraser helped me get into UA by faking my quirk. All the other teachers know that I'm the stray vigilante that Eraser picked up, there's no hiding my clear combat experience from Pro-Heroes

after all" Izuku laughed dryly before continuing. "No one other than you, Eraser, and Mic know that I'm quirkless though, oh and Shinso Hitoshi from Class 1-C but that's a long story. Did you know that UA still has a rule against enrolling the quirkless in the hero department? I could be kicked out if anyone found out."

Todoroki took a moment to process that information after he had fallen silent. Izuku gave him time, he knew that was a lot he had just dropped with relatively little warning.

"Aizawa-sensei and Yamada-sensei are together?"

"I spill my life story to you and that's your only question?" Izuku asked incredulously, bursting into laughter. Apparently, having any sort of serious conversation with the other boy was virtually impossible, not that Izuku particularly minded. He didn't think he had ever laughed this much with someone his age.

Todoroki nodded once, looking slightly confused at what Izuku was finding so amusing.

"Yes, they're together but you can't tell anyone else that either." Izuku finally replied when he had recovered from his laughing fit.

Recovery Girl chose that moment to potter over to them to remind Todoroki that he had a class to get to, and that Izuku had to be left alone to rest. While her words let no room for arguments, there was a hint of affection in her tone that had Izuku suspecting that she had been listening for a while, as to not interrupt their conversation. Izuku sent her a grateful smile before she disappeared off into her office again.

"Goodbye Midoriya, and I promise I won't tell anyone."

"I know you won't, thank you Todoroki."

With that, Todoroki turned and left the room, leaving Izuku properly alone for the first time since he had woken up in the infirmary. He sill had a lot to think about, from his plans to get Hitoshi moved onto the hero course, to Bakugo turning to to be the 'Kacchan' from his childhood, but he decided that could all wait. All he wanted to do right now was sleep. He shuffled himself down into a comfortable position and was out like a light minutes later.

Chapter End Notes

As always thank you for reading!

The next chapter may be a week delayed because my nan died this week, and my partner's dad had a heart attack on the same day (I'm not joking, you couldn't write this shit) so we're going to be travelling a lot next week. At the very latest chapter 5 will be posted on November 9th.

Also you may have noticed that I've updated the chapter count. As I was writing chapter 5, it was getting way too long so I've ended up splitting it into 3 to make sure I stick to my ~4000 word chapters. As long as nothing else gets too long this fic should end on chapter 8 now.

Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

> An uneventful weekend in the Erasermic household is interrupted by Izuku's half baked scheming.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Izuku had found it surprisingly easy to convince Mic to let him stay off school on Friday. Really, it was a small miracle that they had let him stay at home on his own, given how worried they had been. Not that Izuku could blame them, he did seem to be making a habit of getting hurt when neither of them was around to help him.

The day alone had given him time to get his thoughts in order. While he still hadn't figured out quite how he felt about Bakugo being his long lost childhood friend turned bully, he had decided that he was just going to treat the blond exactly as he had before. Prior to UA, the last time he had even seen Bakugo was when the other boy had gone home after they had returned from the park only to find his apartment building toppled and his mother dead. Not that he could blame the six year old Bakugo for that, but equally it didn't entitle the boy to an explanation from him.

The other problem was a bit more complex. He knew that if he didn't present the idea of Hitoshi joining 1-A to Eraser correctly, he would be shot down. It wasn't often that people got moved from general studies to the hero course, let alone before the sports festival had taken place. Izuku was hoping that the fact that Eraser himself had made that move in his first year at UA as well would make him more sympathetic to the idea.

Izuku didn't quite know why he was going to such lengths for a boy he barely knew but something in him recognised himself in Hitoshi. Their circumstances weren't identical, but they were similar enough that Izuku wanted to do everything he could to prevent Hitoshi from giving up on his dreams the same way he had. If he had learnt anything from being adopted by Eraser and Mic, it was that sometimes all that was needed to get you back onto the right track was having someone to fight for you. Izuku hoped he could be that person for Hitoshi. The fact that Hitoshi had still come to UA despite being

rejected from the hero course gave him hope that he wasn't too late already.

He had a plan, now all he had to do was wait until he could put it into action.

Saturdays were the designated lazy days in the Aizawa-Yamada household with no chores, no expectations to be up even remotely before 12pm, and especially no patrols. Under normal circumstances, Izuku loved this tradition. It meant that he had a chance to catch up on sleep, and could take a night of patrol without the guilt of choosing himself over the people he was helping creeping up on him.

Today, however, it was just an annoyance.

Izuku had decided yesterday that the best time to ask Eraser to give Hitoshi a chance to join 1-A would be while they were on patrol, not that he could now remember why his sleep addled self had made that decision, beyond a vague understanding that Eraser always seemed to be in a better mood when out on a roof at night. Thinking about it the man really was like the bat hero from those old American comics.

He was waiting in their living room for his guardians to return from their evening walk, fully decked out in his Verdant costume. While he usually joined them, he had argued out of going today on the basis of still recovering from the exhaustion of Recovery Girl's quirk, and used that opportunity to change.

His plan was simple. He was going to threaten to go out on patrol alone and, knowing Eraser's disposition for fatherly worry, hope that the pro-hero would follow him to ensure his safety.

Ok, so maybe it wasn't the best idea he had ever had but he was in too deep now. Eraser wouldn't actually kill him for manipulating him, right?

Shouta would never admit it, but he actually enjoyed their evening walks quite a bit. Their lazy Saturdays had been a tradition since they had both started as pro-heroes as a way to carve out time to spend together amidst their busy schedules. Then they had adopted the Problem Child, and while he had seemed to appreciate the break that their weekend tradition provided, Hizashi had noticed early on that the kid seemed to struggle to sleep after such an inactive day. He had bounced into the living room the next Saturday insisting on the health benefits of an evening walk, and that both Izuku and Shouta should

join him. It appeared that Izuku was equally as unable to argue with an enthusiastic Hizashi as Shouta himself was.

He found it relaxing to stroll around their neighbourhood, able to enjoy the beauty of the city without needing to worry about stopping villains. Having his family with him was a bonus. He didn't have to worry them getting hurt while he wasn't there if they were out with him, although the kid had still been wrapped up in bed when they were getting ready to leave today. Shouta wasn't so cruel as to drag a kid out of bed after having a ceiling dropped on top of him not even two days prior. Besides, even his Problem Child couldn't possibly get himself into trouble while at home in bed.

As Hizashi unlocks their front door and Shouta processes the scene in front of him, he deeply regrets jinxing himself.

Izuku was sat on the sofa, clearly waiting for them to come home, dressed in his Verdant costume. The support department hadn't had time to repair the damage that Bakugo's explosions had done to it; the kid was lucky they had decided to make the clothing out of fireproof fabric, and that the dark colours masked most of the singe marks unless you were looking closely. The Problem Child was also fidgeting nervously with one of his knives.

Shouta could feel a headache developing already.

"What's going on, little listener? You know we don't do patrols on Saturdays, and you should be resting." He could hear the strained cheer in his husband's voice.

Shouta said nothing, slouching over the the coffee machine to turn it on. He was not handling this conversation without caffeine.

When Izuku only chuckled nervously instead of offering any response, Hizashi came and joined him in the kitchen. They worked silently together to prepare the drinks, making an extra mug of coffee for Izuku because he suspected that neither of them would be sleeping much that night, and a camomile tea for Hizashi.

Shouta buried his nose in his coffee cup as soon as it was ready and wandered back over to the living room area. On his way past, he snatched the knife from Izuku's hand and threw it onto the coffee table, ignoring his squawk of protest.

Hizashi had followed him through from the kitchen carrying the other two mugs. As Shouta slumped down onto the sofa, Hizashi replaced

the confiscated knife with his coffee. Izuku looked grateful to have something to do with his hands again.

Shouta took a long slurp from his coffee, examining his Problem Child with tired eyes. “So, what’s going on Problem Child?”

Izuku gulped, “I want to go on patrol tonight?” He phrased it like a question, looking like he was regretting every decision that has lead him there.

“Why?”

“J-just. I just do.”

“Ok” Shouta found himself nodding, he knew where this was going, the only question remaining was the why. “I’m assuming you’ll still be going even if I don’t join you, right?”

Izuku nodded tersely.

Hizashi was uncharacteristically silent throughout this exchange, probably, like Shouta, sensing that there was more to this than just an unusually timed patrol.

There was a long moment of silence interrupted only by the sound of their drinking and their tabby cat Mocha jumping up to settle on Izuku’s lap. He starts stroking her absentmindedly.

Shouta let out a long sigh. Finishing his coffee, he stood, placing his mug back onto the coffee table with slightly more force than was strictly necessary. “Fine then, Problem Child. Let’s go.”

Izuku beamed but didn’t move, not wanting to disturb Mocha who was peacefully sleeping in his lap. Shouta headed to their bedroom to collect his capture weapon while the Problem Child figured out how to free himself without waking the cat up. He heard Hizashi following him and as soon as the door closed behind them he leaned back into his husband’s chest, smiling as arms wrapped around him immediately.

“I’ll find out what the Problem Child wants, I’m sure it’s nothing too serious if he wants to tell me while we’re on patrol”

He felt Hizashi smile against his neck, leaving a kiss there before pulling back and grabbing the capture weapon from where it was hanging on the back of the door.

“Keep the little listener, and yourself, safe” he said as he arranged the weapon around Shouta’s shoulders.

“I will. Get some sleep, you’ve got your radio show in the morning. I love you, ‘Zashi”

“I love you too, Shou”

Grabbing his googles off of his bedside table, giving their black cat, Essie, a quick scratch behind the ears, and Hizashi one last kiss, he left the bedroom. Izuku was ready to leave by the time he emerged, apparently successful at not waking Mocha up as she was still soundly sleeping in the warm spot he had left behind on the sofa. Shouta also noticed that the knife he had thrown onto the coffee table had also been tucked back into his arm holsters where it belonged. The kid was serious about this patrol then.

He nodded for Izuku to follow him as they left the house and they quickly found themselves running across rooftops, heading towards the rougher side of the city. Shouta had made sure that his patrol route always centred around the lower income districts due to the lack of other heroes patrolling them. Sometimes he couldn’t help but agree with the kid that most heroes didn’t deserve that title when their want for fame and money got in the way of protecting the people who needed it the most.

Up here, they were almost invisible from the ground. All even the keenest eyed observer would see was two dark shadows leaping over the space between the buildings, and that’s only if they decided to look up. Shouta found the vantage point relaxing, knowing that he could see any villains long before they saw him reassured him that he could not be caught off guard.

Not by the villains at least. He would never admit to anyone, but when he heard the kid shout for his attention from the building ahead of him he jumped slightly.

He watched in horror as his Problem Child ran fully speed towards the edge of the building he was on. The building that had far too big of a gap to jump across unassisted. Just before he hit the edge, he expanded his staff in his hand and used it to propel himself across the gap.

He landed heavily, stumbling a bit before stabilising himself and turning back to face him with what Shouta was sure was a huge grin on his face underneath the mask.

Since he had been joined by Izuku, he had had to adjust his route slightly in order to avoid any gaps wider than they could comfortably jump. While Shouta could manage fine with his capture weapon, Izuku wouldn't fair so well with his bulky weapon of choice and lack of quirk. He didn't say why he suddenly changed his route, but he knew the kid had figured out the reason. In hindsight, he should have known that his Problem Child was going to find a solution to this problem at some point. The kid really did see any obstacle as a challenge to be taken down.

"Hah! I did it!" Izuku shouted, sounding way too pleased over the fact that he almost gave Shouta a heart attack. "I thought the carbon fibre would allow enough spring to use it as a pole vault, I'll have to get more used to the landing though. Maybe…" he trailed off into indecipherable muttering as Shouta landed on the roof beside him.

"Problem Child, you're going to be the death of me" Shouta mumbled to himself. Izuku heard him, and laughed out loud.

"Don't be so grumpy, Eraser. I knew it was possible… theoretically"

Shouta shot him a quirk-enhanced glare and the kid had the audacity to laugh even harder. Truly he had lost all of his intimidation factor with this one.

They both straightened as a sudden scream rang out through the night.

Shouta pulled his goggles up over his eyes and took a running leap onto the next roof, heading in the direction that the scream came from. They scanned the alleyways below them as they passed overhead, working together in silence, both straining their ears to listen for further sounds of distress or struggle. Beyond the normal sounds of city traffic, and people out enjoying the night, nothing could be heard.

This was the worst part of hero work in Shouta's opinion, the frantic search, just hoping that you would find the incident in time to help. Too often, heroes, himself included, only stumbled across the crime too late, finding a dead or severely injured victim and the villain long gone.

Another scream sounded, this time brutally cut off, but much closer.

Shouta flung himself off the building towards the main road, wrapping his capture weapon around a lamp post and using it to swing himself

forward, knowing that Izuku would catch up with him. He crossed above the dual carriageway in seconds and skidded to a halt at the entrance to a darkened alley.

Silhouetted against the light from the adjacent road was a hulking figure who appeared to be crouched over a bag, rummaging through it. They were so preoccupied that they failed to notice that they weren't alone in the alley anymore. Slumped next to them was the unmistakable shape of someone lying immobile on the ground, and Shouta prayed that they were merely unconscious.

Shouta crept towards the figure. Upon closer inspection, he appeared to be made completely of some sort of stone, and was easily as tall as Shouta's shoulder while crouched. The man lying at his feet had some alarming bruising around his neck but otherwise seemed unharmed. Shouta could see the subtle rise and fall of his chest indicating that he had passed out from lack of oxygen. In all likelihood, the villain had probably strangled him in a panic to stop him from screaming.

Izuku chose that moment to make his presence on the scene known. He dropped directly on top of the villain, bringing his staff down on his head as he fell. An almighty thwack sounded as the carbon-fibre connected with stone and the force sent Izuku recoiling backwards. He flipped in the air and landed in a crouch opposite Shouta.

The villain appeared to have barely felt the hit. He stood up from his crouch slowly, frowning as he took in first Izuku, and then Shouta behind him, both poised to attack.

The villain charged at Izuku, presumably thinking he was the easier target due to his size. As Izuku dodged to the side, his hand strayed to his belt, clipping his collapsed staff back to his belt now it had proven ineffective against this guy's quirk and pulling out a flash bang.

Shouta ran forward cursing internally. *This* was the guy they happened to stumble across on their impromptu patrol. Someone whose quirk completely nullified both his quirk and Izuku's staff.

He watched the villain, instead of changing course to charge at Izuku again, he carried on sprinting at top speed away from them. Shouta snapped his capture weapon out, wrapping it around the villain's head to restrain him. Instead of pulling the villain backwards, his momentum sent Shouta flying towards the guy's back. He aimed a kick, using his entire body weight which was enough to send the villain toppling to the ground face first. Shouta landed in a crouch on

his back.

“Aww you could’ve at least let me do something, Eraser?” Izuku whined. Despite his tone, when Shouta turned back to check on him, he was already kneeling next to the unconscious man, checking his vitals before rolling him into recovery position.

“Not the time, kid. I assume you’ve already called for the police and an ambulance?”

“Yep” Izuku replied. “Since we’ve got nothing to do until these guys get taken off our hands, I wanted to talk to you about something”

Finally.

Shouta had known the kid had an ulterior motive for dragging them out here. He hadn’t wanted to push the topic, letting Izuku bring it up in his own time but he couldn’t help his curiosity as to what his Problem Child could possibly want to prompt him to act so strangely.

“Do you know of a Hitoshi Shinso from class 1-C?”

Well that wasn’t what Shouta had expected. He had only seen Izuku going out of his way to talk to Todoroki since school started. Shouta had been convinced he barely knew his classmates names, let alone knowing the given name of someone from a different class.

“I’ve heard his name mentioned. What about him?”

At that moment, Shouta felt the villain underneath him begin to move again. He had assumed that the fall had knocked him unconscious, but apparently he had simply been biding his time to strike while they were distracted.

The stone villain jumped to his feet as though Shouta’s weight on his back was nothing. He pushed himself up with one hand while flailing the other behind his back, trying to swat Shouta off of him.

Shouta jumped at the moment that the villain stood, using the momentum to give himself a bit of extra height. He shot his capture weapon out and snagged it onto a second floor fire escape overhanging the alley.

He hung off the edge, out of reach of the villain, and contemplated their options. From this vantage point he got a good look at the villains face for the first time. He seemed startlingly young, only a

couple years older than his class, and from what Shouta could make out in the low light he seemed to be…crying?

Izuku pulled out another flash bang. Their eyes met briefly over the villain's head before Shouta closed his tightly.

The was a momentary pause. Shouta could hear sirens growing closer, and the quiet sniffling from the villain as Izuku waited for the right moment. Eventually, the villain must decided that Izuku was an easier target because there was a brilliant white snap that Shouta saw even through his closed eyes.

When the light faded, Shouta opened his eyes again. The villain definitely was blinded but instead of randomly swinging at either of them he appeared to be trying to run again, stumbling in the opposite direction of Izuku with one hand on the wall as a guide.

Shouta dropped back to the ground and wrapped the villain in his capture weapon. That seemed to be enough. All the fight went out of the hulking stone figure and he slumped to the ground, crying harder. Perplexed by the young man's strange behaviour he reached over to rub his shoulder, unsure of what else to do.

The police and paramedics arrived shortly later to take both men away, and Shouta made a mental note to look further into the incident once the legal proceedings had been dealt with.

Izuku followed Shouta back to the rooftops in silence. Shouta could tell he was itching to continue their interrupted conversation from earlier but that he also didn't want to pull Shouta from his thoughts. He decided to take pity on the kid; there was nothing he could do in regard to the strange villain right now anyways.

"What were you saying about Hitoshi Shinso?"

Izuku snapped to attention, seeming to steel himself before answering. "I think that he should join class 1-A now we have an opening."

"Problem Child, you are aware that just because the class isn't full anymore doesn't mean that someone new has to join?" Shouta retorted somewhat sarcastically but he was already considering the suggestion. He'd have to meet Shinso of course, but he also knew that Izuku wouldn't suggest someone that he didn't think would be a suitable candidate for the hero course. He likely had a potentially powerful quirk that was ineffective against the entrance exam robots.

Shouta began walking across the roof in the direction of their home as he turned over the suggestion. Hizashi had just brought up this exact idea just a few nights previously. In fact, if Shouta didn't know for a fact that Hizashi was incapable of lying to him, he would have thought that his husband was in on this scheme.

"Fine. Bring him to meet me after school on Monday"

Izuku beamed under his mask. "Thanks Eraser!"

"No promises kid, I only said I'd meet with him" Shouta knew that Izuku knew that was a lie, but he couldn't bring himself to try and be more convincing. As long as Izuku was correct about the boy's potential, which he didn't doubt, Shouta would fight tooth and nail to get him added to the hero course.

"Come on then Problem Child, I want to go to bed."

"I'll race you!" Izuku said with a laugh, and he was racing off before Shouta could reply.

Shouta smiled fondly to himself before taking off after his kid.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for reading!

I've had a crazy two weeks but I'm back to this fic and am halfway through writing chapter 7 at the moment, so the end of Arc 1 of this series is in sight! I've also spent some time planning the rest of the plot out beyond the vague ideas I had before so you might notice some changes to the planned fics in the series notes.
The next chapter will be up next Sunday.

Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

> Hitoshi's past comes to light, and Izumi and Shouta do everything they can to help him.

Chapter Notes

> Content warning: this chapter contains mentions of child abuse throughout. There's nothing too explicit but be warned.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Monday rolled around too quickly for Izuku's liking.

He found himself slumped over his desk in homeroom before he knew it, feeling no more rested than he had after that damn battle training on Thursday.

He lifted his head off of his arms just enough to see the teacher's podium at the front of the room when he heard the door open. At least Eraser looked as tired as he felt. The man had spent his entire Sunday digging through the school's rule book to find out if there was anything preventing a student changing courses before the sports festival. As far as he had found, while it had never been done before in the school's history, there was no explicit rules against it as long as there was some sort of 'exam' conducted to emulate the entrance exam. What that exam consisted of was up to the teacher's discretion.

"I have been told that you must pick a class representative before the end of the day" Eraser's monotone broke Izuku out of his reverie, "I don't care how you choose, just don't make too much noise." With that he crawled into his sleeping bag and promptly closed his eyes.

The class burst into chatter as everyone began nominating themselves. Izuku didn't bother joining in, he was self aware enough to know that he was unsuited to the role. He simply put his head back down on his desk to try and ignore the ruckus going on around him.

Unsurprisingly, it was Iida who called everyone to attention. His booming voice rang loud over the buzz of noise, suggesting that they hold a vote. The rest of the class quickly agreed.

Once the paper slips were handed out, Izuku scribbled Iida on his

before handing it back in. Although it grated against his own need for independence on occasion, there was no one else who had even attempted to keep the rest of the class in line. Plus Izuku figured that he was too noble to vote for himself, despite how much he clearly wanted the position. Call it levelling the playing field.

Once the votes were counted and written up it was clear that almost everyone had voted for themselves. Iida and Yaoyorozu had tied for first place with two votes each and they agreed to decide between them who would get the position before the end of the school day. Izuku was a bit taken a back to see one vote next to his own name. He didn't think he had bonded with anyone enough for them to think that he could lead the class, especially when he ditched or ignored them at every socialisation opportunity.

Most of the class seemed satisfied with the results and by the time the first bell rang everyone had rejoined their friends or were doing last minute homework.

Eraser pulled himself up to leave the room, somehow shuffle-walking across the room while still cocooned in his sleeping bag to head to, presumably, the teacher's lounge to continue his nap.

Morning classes passed in a blur of note taking. When the bell rang signalling their morning break, Izuku took his time packing up his things. Normally he passed the 15 minutes napping on the surprisingly comfortable sofa in the teacher's lounge but after the stunt he had pulled that weekend, he didn't want to push his luck any further with Eraser, so he had decided to simply nap at his desk that day.

Once everyone else had filtered out of the classroom to go and enjoy the warm spring day outside, Izuku noticed that he wasn't alone in hanging around in the classroom.

Todoroki was still sat at his desk as well. Izuku raised his eyebrows when he noticed that, in an uncharacteristic breaking of the school rules, he had his phone in hand, poised as though waiting for a call.

As if on cue Todoroki's phone began to buzz.

His eyes flicked up to meet Izuku's before he swiped to answer the call, and he was surprised to see a hint of something that looked suspiciously like fear on the other boy's usually impassive face as he raised the phone to ear.

Logically, Izuku knew that he should leave, give Todoroki the privacy

that he was clearly seeking to take the call, but he couldn't bring himself to leave the other boy alone after seeing that vulnerable expression.

“Father.” Todoroki said curtly into the phone.

Of course it was fucking Endeavor.

That explained the reaction.

“I’ve told you, I can’t train during the week. I do enough training at school anyways.”

Izuku could hear nothing from the other side of the call from where he was still sat at his desk, but judging from Todoroki’s reluctance, and knowing what Endeavor was like, it wasn’t hard to conclude that this ‘training’ probably wasn’t pleasant.

“No. I really can’t afford to get injured if I want to keep performing well in the practical heroics class.” There was a hint of desperation entering his voice now.

Izuku had a horrible feeling that this training with Endeavor was the cause of that bruise he had seen on the first day of school. Making a snap decision, he grabbed a piece of paper from inside of his desk, and scribbled a quick note on it, before placing it on Todoroki’s desk.

At this distance, Izuku could now hear Endeavor’s faint voice coming from the phone. He didn’t sound too angry, by his standards at least.

Todoroki read the note, his brows furrowing in confusion. When he looked up at Izuku for clarification, Izuku simply pointed at the note again, mouthing ‘read it’ at him.

“I can’t tonight. I’ve been invited to study at a friend’s house and I don’t want to risk failing any classes this early.” Endeavor began to protest, but his was cut off as Todoroki continued. “Tell Fuyumi that I won’t be home for dinner.”

He hung up the call before Endeavor could respond, switching it off completely, and stowing it back in his bag.

“Thank you, Midoriya. Are you sure your Aizawa-sensei and Yamada-sensei won’t mind having a guest around at such short notice?”

Izuku felt his cheeks heat at the thanks. “Nah, they’ll be happy, if

anything. They've been hassling me about making friends ever since school started" Izuku laughed awkwardly.

Todoroki didn't seem to know what to say to that. To prevent an awkward silence, Izuku continued talking, "Just hang around here after school ok? We've just got something to take care of before we can leave this evening but it shouldn't take too long. Oh, and I hope you like cats."

"You have cats?" Todoroki asked, "I've never stroked a cat before. Dad always said they were dirty."

Izuku laughed, grateful for the change in topic. "That will change this evening, don't you worry. You'll be lucky if you escape without being used as a cat bed"

The rest of the break passed with Izuku once again perched on Sato's desk, enthusiastically describing each of their cats to Todoroki. Before they knew it, the rest of their classmates were streaming back into the room for their next class.

Izuku situated himself back at his own desk as Snipe called the class to attention. He found himself not regretting his spur of the moment decision to invite Todoroki to their home. In fact, he found himself looking forward to it.

Under his desk, he shot Mic and Eraser a quick text, warning them of their upcoming house guest before he turned his attention to what Snipe was saying.

By the time the lunch bell rang, Izuku was itching to update Hitoshi about the progress he had made with Eraser over the weekend.

Izuku was so preoccupied in his rush to leave the classroom that he failed to notice the figure moving to intercept his path until a hand grabbed onto his shoulder and roughly yanked him backwards. Instinctively, Izuku ducked out of reach of the hand and spun, raising his hands in a defensive position. He relaxed his stance upon seeing Bakugo standing behind him.

"What the fuck do you want?"

Bakugo didn't reply. His eyes were darting between Izuku, and the classroom door where people were still making their way out. Whatever he wanted, he clearly felt that it shouldn't be said in front of others. Izuku humoured him, he waved off Todoroki, who looked like

he would intervene at the slightest hint of violence from Bakugo, and waited.

Eventually, they were alone.

"Well get on with it. I'm supposed to be meeting someone." Izuku knew he was being rude but he didn't care. He had meant what he said to Kirishima when he was in the infirmary, he really didn't care what Bakugo did or thought of him. He was only hearing him out now because he really wasn't in the mood to get a detention for fighting in school.

"Where did you disappear off to when we were kids? Why didn't you try to contact me again? And you were diagnosed quirkless, how the fuck did you get into the hero course of all places? They have rules against letting quirkless dekus onto the hero course you know." He was practically shouting by the end. So much for wanting a private conversation.

"First of all, I'm not useless." Izuku snapped back, "turns out that that doctor was an idiot and my quirk just came in late"

Bakugo looked like he didn't believe a word of that which was fair, Izuku probably wouldn't believe the story either if their roles were reversed but it didn't matter, no one would believe Bakugo. No one else had known that he had seen a quirk specialist as a child, and Eraser had dipped into some of his… less than legal underground contacts to make sure that no proof existed that Izuku Midoriya had ever been diagnosed quirkless. It angered him to no end that it had been a necessary step, but until he was a proper hero there was nothing he could do in the face of a society that thought of the quirkless as less than human.

"Secondly," Izuku continued "mum died in that building collapse, I'm sure Auntie told you. How exactly was I supposed to contact you from the home with no address or phone number? Hell, I didn't even remember what your surname was until the other day!" Izuku was shouting too now but he couldn't bring himself to care. Bakugo took a step back as his tirade continued, now that the dam had broken, he couldn't stop until he had said his piece. "You treated me like garbage as soon as you found out that I was quirkless back when we were kids, and even now you think you're superior all because you have some flashy quirk. News flash: you're not. You wouldn't last a minute against villains in the real world. Now, excuse me because I've got somewhere to be."

Izuku turned on his heel and stalked out of the room, making his way towards their hiding place. He did strangely feel lighter after having got that off of his chest, he didn't even realise how much his childhood friend's change in attitude after his diagnosis still upset him until he was saying it.

Surprisingly, when he pulled the door open Hitoshi wasn't already there as normal. He must have gotten held up too, if Izuku had beaten him here despite having taken the extra time to shout at Bakugo.

Not thinking too much of it, Izuku sat down and pulled his phone out to see that both of his guardians had responded to his message from earlier. Eraser had sent a simple thumbs up in acknowledgement, but Mic's reply made him very glad he was alone.

The man had sent a long, rambling message about how proud he was that Izuku was making friends and excelling in hero school. Tears were spilling down Izuku's cheeks by the time he finished reading. He had barely socialised with his class mates, but it felt nice knowing that his parents would be proud of him no matter what he did. While he knew that Eraser and Mic wanted the best for him, he had kind of assumed that they had taken him in out of a strange sense of obligation to save him. Seeing, written down, the proof that they would be proud of him for simply being himself touched him. He hadn't experienced unconditional love like this since his mum had died.

Izuku quickly swiped his tears away as the door was pulled open. Apparently Hitoshi could still tell that he had been crying, however, as the first words out of his mouth were "what on earth happened to you?"

Izuku chuckled wetly, used to Hitoshi's blunt tone by now. "Just realised my parents actually care about me."

"Sounds like you were being pretty oblivious to only realise that now." Hitoshi sat himself down next to Izuku. "They clearly wanted you enough to adopt you."

Izuku smiled sympathetically at his friend. Since he had told Hitoshi that he had also grown up in the system, they had mostly avoided bringing up the topic. Neither of them had yet shared the tragedies that had lead them there, but it was comforting to know that they had someone who would understand if they did want to talk. While he knew that Hitoshi was happy for him that he had been adopted out,

the other boy so clearly wanted a family that wanted him for more than the fostering checks. Izuku didn't know how to help with that particular problem.

The conversation lulled into a comfortable silence.

Hitoshi focused his attention on his phone as usual while Izuku tried to focus on his own. He kept getting distracted, throwing glances in Hitoshi's direction, wanting to ask him how he was feeling about his upcoming meeting with Eraser but not knowing how to broach the subject.

Izuku turned to study the other boy's face more closely. Now that he was lit by his phone screen, rather that the dim overhead light of the cupboard, Izuku noticed something. It appeared that Hitoshi had concealer covering the faint scars that Izuku had noticed around his mouth on the first day.

Hitoshi looked up then, startled by the sudden intensity of Izuku's attention. "What?"

"Why have you covered your scars?" The question was out of Izuku's mouth before he could think. He winced at his lack of tact, it wasn't his place to judge if someone wanted to cover up old injuries, he had done that plenty of times. "Sorry! Ignore me. I spoke before I thought. You don't have to tell me, its really none of my business"

Hitoshi looked contemplative for a moment before sighing. "It's fine, I should have realised that you'd notice given how observant you are." He paused, dropping his gaze to his hands. He was twisting his fingers together in a way that looked rather painful from where Izuku was watching. Eventually the purple eyes met his again. "Promise that you won't tell anyone?"

Izuku nodded, bracing himself for what he was about to hear. He knew how little people cared for kids like them, having a 'villainous' quirk was almost as bad as being quirkless in the eyes of society.

"My foster parents muzzle me"

He rushed through the words, as though he thought that saying it quickly would make the reality somehow less painful.

"What?" Izuku's voice sounded cold, even to him. Out of all the terrible scenarios he had prepared himself for he had never even considered a *muzzle.* How could anyone do that to a kid who was

supposed to be in their care?

“Please don’t tell anyone.” Hitoshi repeated. “Despite everything, this is the best foster placement I’ve had. They make sure we have three meals a day, and I get new clothes when I need them, they’re just scared of my quirk.”

“They muzzle you, Hitoshi. Your scars are from a fucking muzzle.”

“The scars are from when I was a kid and a different home. They used to use a hard plastic one until they realised that it was cutting into me when it was done up too tightly.”

“That doesn’t make it better!” Izuku was furious. Despite his promises to not act on this new information, he wanted nothing more than to pay Hitoshi’s foster parents a visit as Verdant. He would make sure they were locked away for a long time. He took a deep breath to calm himself, rage wouldn’t help Hitoshi. “Why decide to cover up the scars now? You didn’t seem bothered about people seeing them before.”

“I’m not bothered by people seeing them.” Hitoshi replied shortly. “My foster mum was… angry on Friday when I got in from school, I don’t know why. She tightened the muzzle more than usual and it left bruises. People would definitely ask questions about that.”

“Look, I know you think this is the best placement you’ll get but you deserve better treatment than this. I promised that I wouldn’t tell anyone and I won’t, but I highly recommend telling Eraser this evening.”

It was a shot in the dark, but knowing how much Hitoshi looked up to Eraserhead, maybe he would trust the man enough to tell him what was going on. Izuku also didn’t really know what Eraser could do in such a situation, but he knew that the overgrown moth would do everything in his power to ensure all of his students were safe.

Hitoshi scoffed. “Why would Aizawa-sensei care about me?”

“My turn to tell you a secret that you can’t tell anybody.”

“You do seem to have a lot of those.”

“Shut up.” Izuku shot back, “Anyways, the parents I mentioned earlier? I was talking about Aizawa-sensei and his partner. They took me in when I really needed a home, and probably saved my life. He would never turn his back on someone he can help.”

Hitoshi returned his attention to his hands, frowning. At least he seemed to seriously be considering Izuku's words.

“Ok” Hitoshi finally said.

“Ok?”

“I will consider talking to Aizawa-sensei.”

Izuku smiled at him gently, “thank you. He won’t do anything without your permission, I promise but you deserve better than this.”

Shouta made sure to get back to his classroom slightly before the final class of the day ended. Nemuri gave him a strange look as he entered but said nothing, she knew him well enough not to question his strange behaviour.

Once Nemuri finished her lecture, he stepped forwards, halting the kids in their tracks as they tried to pack up as quickly as possible. "Bakugo, please stay behind for a few minutes. I'd like to have a word with you."

Bakugo frowned in confusion but didn’t move from his desk as the rest of the class finished packing and headed towards the exit.

Shouta leaned against his desk as he waited for the room to clear, smirking into his capture weapon as he saw Izuku tugging a slightly confused looking Todoroki out of the room by his sleeve. He knew that Izuku wouldn’t go too far. Most likely they would follow their classmates most of the way out of the school before doubling back to wait for Shinso. His Problem Child was smart enough to hide the fact that he was quirkless, and an illegal vigilante, in the hero course, Shouta had no doubt that he could also effectively hide the fact that he lived with two of his teachers.

"Am I in trouble?" Bakugo's question pulled Shouta out of his train of thought.

"Not technically, but I did want to discuss your behaviour during training"

Bakugo huffed. "We were told to treat the training as though it was a real scenario, a real villain wouldn't have pulled any punches in that situation."

Goddammit. At this point Shouta should just start making a list of all of All Might's fuck ups to take to Nezu. It really doesn't take a lot of common sense to not tell 15 year olds to actually attack each other full out. He didn't blame Bakugo for the incident per se, he had watched the camera footage back and Izuku had very clearly thrown himself in front of the final explosion, but someone had to tell the kid to pull his punches when fighting against his classmates.

"What would you have done if Midoriya hadn't dodged the first of your gauntlet blasts? You aimed at his head."

He could see Bakugo considering his words as a look of guilt washed over his face.

"It's ok. Nothing happened and Midoriya is fine, it’s just my responsibility to make sure nothing happens in the future. You have the potential to be a great hero, you just need to know when to hold back."

Bakugo nodded. "It won't happen again, teach. Can I go now? I need to catch my train."

Shouta nodded and walked Bakugo to the door. He had meant what he'd said, with his skill and determination, he was sure Bakugo would succeed as a top hero.

Shinso was leaning against the wall outside the classroom when they stepped out into the corridor but notably Izuku and Todoroki were nowhere in sight. He saw Bakugo throwing a confused look between the two of them and could see the gears turning in his head as he tried to figure out the connection but he said nothing. He nodded towards Shouta before turning on his heel and stalking off towards the exit without further acknowledging Shinso's presence.

"I'm guessing you didn't expel him for almost killing me then?" Izuku's voice came from behind him. Despite the serious words, his tone was light.

"He didn't almost kill you Problem Child, I've seen you get more injured from some of the stupid shit you've pulled." He cringed at his words, he really shouldn't be swearing in front of his students. He would never hear the end of it from Nezu if he found out. "Come on then, lets get this over with. I need to go home."

Shouta slumped back into his classroom rubbing his eyes, trusting that Izuku and Shinso would follow him. "Where's Todoroki, Problem

Child? Did he change his mind about coming over to ours?", he said over his shoulder.

"Nah, I took him to the teacher's lounge to wait with Mic. I didn't think he'd fancy just hanging around in the corridor."

Shouta seated himself on top of his desk as he nodded. Izuku was also perched cross-legged on top of the desk opposite, leaving Shinso the only one still standing. It seemed like he didn't quite know what to do with himself, he had stopped midway between the two desks and made no move to sit even when Shouta gestured for him to make himself more comfortable. There had been only a slight reaction at the mention of Mic, his eyes flicked up to Shouta before settling back on the ground but otherwise no shock at the revelation that Izuku lived with him.

Shouta had made sure to read through Shinso's student file over the weekend and it had been immediately clear why Izuku had been so drawn to him. A boy with what others would see as a villainous quirk, who had been bounced around foster homes since he was a child. The similarities were obvious.

"So, Izuku has suggested that you would be a good fit for the hero course."

Shinso nodded at his shoes but still said nothing.

"Why do you want to be a hero?"

Shinso looked up, first at Izuku who gave him an encouraging nod, and then met Shouta's eyes for the first time. "I want to prove that everyone who told me I could only ever be a villain because of my quirk is wrong. I want to make sure that people who discriminate against others because of their quirks face some kind of justice, and I hope that I can be a role model for other kids like me who are growing up being called monsters and villains for something that they can't control."

His conviction was almost startling. In all his years of teaching, Shouta had found it rare to see first years who had such a clear idea of their morals. The sentiment was similar to ideals that Izuku had expressed, but where Izuku had to almost be forced into pursuing his justice legally, it seemed that Shinso had never considered any path other than heroism. Shouta couldn't decide whether that was for better or worse.

He carefully kept his face blank. "Have you done any sort of fight training in the past?"

Shinso dropped his gaze back to his shoes. "no…" he muttered, barely audible enough for Shouta to hear him, "I'm not allowed to do extracurricular stuff, my foster parents say it's too expensive."

That made alarm bells ring in Shouta's head and a glance at Izuku said that he shared a similar opinion. Interestingly, Izuku didn't seem surprised by this information, just saddened judging by the look on his face. Apparently he'd have to question his Problem Child about Shinso's home life later because he had a sneaking suspicion that there was more to this than meets the eye. That could wait for later, however, for now he had to figure out how to get this kid caught up on almost three weeks of training before their trip to the USJ.

"That's not a problem, kid." Shouta said, "as per the school rules, any student wanting to transfer onto the hero course must take a test that is equivalent to the entrance exam. In just over a week, my class will be taking a trip to the USJ facility for rescue training and that is where I will be conducting your exam."

He paused to gauge Shinso's reaction. For the first time since this conversation had begun, his posture had relaxed slightly and he was no longer staring at his shoes, he still wasn't meeting Shouta's eyes but there was a gleam of hope present there now that hadn't been there before which he counted as a small win.

"You will meet me at Gym Gamma every lunchtime for intensive training leading up to our trip. I trust Izuku's judgment about your potential but you have a lot of catching up to do. I'm warning you now that this training will not be easy, are you ok with that?"

"Yes, Aizawa-sensei. Thank you for this opportunity."

That conviction was back, and Shouta could almost see his younger self reflected in those purple eyes.

Shouta nodded, "I'll see you tomorrow lunchtime then. You should get going now, I wouldn't want your guardians to be wondering where you are."

Shouta didn't miss the slight grimace that crossed his face at those final words, and Shouta made a promise to himself to look into that situation as soon as he was able to. Nonetheless, Shinso took the dismissal gracefully. "I guess I won't be seeing you at lunch tomorrow

then Izuku, but thank you as well for all of your help."

"No worries, you'll have to tell me all about how training went after you pass the exam!" Izuku replied cheerfully and waved goodbye.

Once Shinso was out of the room with the door closed behind him, the smile melted off of Izuku's face. "I'm assuming that you're seeing the red flags too?"

"Yeah Problem Child. I'm also assuming you know more about this situation that I do?"

Izuku nodded in assent but there was a sheepish smile on his face. "I kind of promised that I wouldn't tell anybody, but I did tell him that he could trust you. Try asking him about it during the training, he said that you were his favourite hero so I think that he'll take your advice."

Shouta processed that, running his hand through his hair. He didn't think that he was well known enough to be considered anyone's favourite hero but he was strangely touched by the sentiment. This had been a long day and he wanted nothing more than to curl up in bed with Hizashi and a cat or two.

"Come on then, let's go save Todoroki from Hizashi. If we leave them alone for much longer he won't want to come over anymore."

Izuku hopped off the desk, stretching. "Ok" he headed towards the door but stopped just before opening it, " and by the way Eraser, you're my favourite hero too." he said and then promptly left the room before Shouta could process his words and formulate a reply.

He took a moment to compose himself because he could feel tears pricking at his eyes at the sentiment. Truly, adopting their Problem Child had been one of the best decisions he had ever made.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for reading!

I found this chapter really hard to write but we're approaching the conclusion of arc 1 of this series. There may be another chapter count increase because chapter 7 is getting very long so I may split it but I haven't decided yet. Please let me know if you would prefer 2 normal length chapters or one extra long chapter and then a week off uploads.

Next chapter will be out next sunday

Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

> Todoroki visits the Aizawa-Yamada household, meets the cats, and opens up to Izuku about some family secrets.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Izuku was practically bouncing with excitement by the time they got home. Not only had Eraser seen enough potential in Hitoshi to offer to train him, but he got to spend the entire evening with Todoroki. He was eager to spend time with his classmate outside of school, and was strangely honoured to find himself being the only person that Todoroki hadn't shrugged off when they had attempted to initiate conversation.

As soon as the door was open, they had two cats twisting themselves around their ankles and meowing for food.

Todoroki froze just inside the doorway, seemingly unsure of what to do and Izuku almost wanted to laugh at the look on his face as he attempted to take his next step forward without touching Mocha at all.

Seeing that Izuku wasn't going to save Todoroki, Eraser took pity on him. He scooped the cat up into his arms and deposited her on his shoulder as he made his way into the kitchen. "You'd think we never fed them with how they carry on every time we come home." he commented dryly.

"Don't worry listener!" Mic said cheerfully, patting Todoroki on the shoulder as he passed, "they'll leave you alone once Shou has fed them. They usually just go to sleep once they've eaten."

Todoroki shook his head. "I want to stroke one, if that's ok? I've always wanted to play with a cat"

"Of course you can! I'm sure that Izuku will introduce you to them all, but don't get so distracted by the cats that you forget to do your homework ok?" Mic threw finger guns at them before following Eraser into the kitchen.

Izuku groaned dramatically at his theatrics. "We should at least get a start on our English homework while we wait for the cats to eat. Despite how he acts, Mic takes homework very seriously."

They set themselves up on the plush rug on the living room floor, dragging the coffee table over so they could lean on it.

Izuku whizzed through his English worksheet; as it turned out, listening to Mic talk to himself in English at home everyday had really helped his language skills. He seized the opportunity to watch Todoroki surreptitiously while the other boy was still distracted with his worksheet.

Izuku couldn't explain what had drawn him to Endeavor's son of all people but it seemed that fate had a strange sense of humour. Watching him, eyes trained on his paper and brows furrowed in concentration, Izuku didn't think that he had ever seen anyone so beautiful in his life. And then he had to go and manage to make Izuku laugh in every conversation without even trying. The fluttery feeling he had in his chest whenever he was around the other boy had intensified with every interaction, to the point at even Izuku couldn't deny that he had a crush.

The only problem now was what to do with these feelings.

He had intended to go through the three years of school with as minimal interaction with his teachers and classmates as he could manage, not get attached, and then disappear back into the shadows to continue on as Verdant legally. Well that plan had gone to shit very quickly. He had somehow ended up with parents, a best friend who he worried about constantly, a crush, and a group of his peers who didn't mind his antisocial behaviour and who had given him an open invitation to join them when he felt like it. And somehow, this was the happiest he had been since his mum had died.

He decided he could worry about his plans for after school later, they had three years left to complete before he had to figure out what kind of hero he wanted to be. For now, he was content with the way things were, and he wouldn't dare to risk jeopardising his friendship with Todoroki because of his stupid crush.

"What are you looking at?"

Todoroki's voice broke Izuku out of his thoughts and he felt himself flush at being caught. He hoped that it looked as though he was simply spacing out, rather than obvious that he was staring.

“N-nothing!” Izuku said a little too quickly, “I’ll go get us some drinks.” He scrambled to his feet, ignoring the bewildered expression Todoroki was sending his way as he made his escape into the kitchen.

“That was smooth, little listener.” Mic commented as soon as Izuku had closed the door behind him.

Izuku jumped. He had forgotten that his guardians must still be in here, he hadn't been so lost in admiring Todoroki that he would have missed them walking through the room. Izuku glared at them as Mic had the audacity to laugh at his surprise.

"Here's your drinks, kid" Eraser said from where he was leaning against the counter, he nodded his head towards where two steaming mugs of tea were sat next to the kettle, "go on, you don't want to keep him waiting." Izuku muttered his thanks and moved to grab the mugs, deciding that Todoroki questioning him on his strange behaviour was preferable to his parents teasing him about his, apparently, obvious crush.

The universe had decided to take pity on Izuku because Todoroki's attention was once again focused on his worksheet, and he didn't question the speed at which Izuku had run off, nor the fact that he clearly hadn't been gone long enough for the kettle to boil. He simply thanked Izuku for the drink and returned to his work.

They passed the time in companionable silence. Izuku remained sat on the floor but had started randomly playing with his phone while he waited for Todoroki to finish, he wasn't about to risk saying something he might regret if he just started talking again just to fill the silence.

Eventually they heard the kitchen door reopen and Izuku watched as Todoroki's head jerked up, his whole body tensing as if he was expecting a threat to walk through the door. When two cats emerged instead and the door was pulled closed again behind them, his posture relaxed and his eyes lit up.

"Do you want to say hi to them?"

Todoroki nodded, his gaze following their progress from the kitchen door to the sofa, where they hopped up and settled down to sleep.

Izuku climbed to his feet, gesturing for Todoroki to follow him over to the sofa and sit down.

"This one here is Mocha" he said gesturing to the brown tabby who

had been winding around Todoroki's ankles earlier. "She's very friendly, but to be honest she'll cosy up to anyone she thinks will feed her." After the short explanation, Izuku scooped her up and plonked her onto Todoroki's lap. She blinked up at them for a few moments before deciding that her new spot was sufficiently comfortable and settled back down.

"Go on, you can pet her" he encouraged when it still seemed like Todoroki was unsure of what to do with his hands. Very slowly, he lowed his hand to bury them in her fur.

A smile lit up across his face and Izuku had to retract his earlier thought, *this* was the most beautiful he had seen person he had ever seen. He was radiant with an almost childish wonder in his eyes as he scratched Mocha behind her ears. She nuzzled further into his right hand, seemingly enjoying the warmth coming from it.

Izuku allowed himself to admire the view for a moment longer before joining Todoroki on the sofa. "And this is Chino" he introduced, "short for Cattachino. No prizes for guessing who named him." He rolled his eyes, reaching out to stroke the orange cat next to him. "He's stupid, but he can't help that. Eraser came back from a patrol one day with two tiny balls of fluff just after they officially adopted me. I…" he paused. "I wasn't adjusting well to having a proper home and I think they thought the cats would help me."

"Did they?"

"Yeah, they really did. Gave me a reason to stay in the beginning, and as strange as it sounds, knowing that I wasn't the only one new to the house was comforting in a way."

Todoroki hummed, nodding. "How much do you know about my brother Touya?"

Izuku was taken slightly aback by the sudden change of subject but answered nonetheless, figuring that he had a reason for bringing up his brother. "He's the one who died right? I found an obituary when I was investigating Endeavor but there was no information other information available. It was like all the records had been wiped."

"They were. Father didn't want anyone to know what happened to him" Todoroki looked up and met Izuku's eyes. "He burnt."

He stopped, letting Izuku process that information. All that could be heard was Mic and Eraser chatting as they cooked, and the cats

purring.

"Endeavor?" Izuku guessed.

"Might as well have been." He fell silent again, focusing his attention back on Mocha as he gathered his thoughts. "Out of the four of us, only Touya and I inherited Endeavor's flames. He wanted to train us to surpass All Might. I was too young to handle the training so Touya would take my punishments for me but… his body couldn't handle his flames. He got burnt by his own quirk trying to please our bastard father."

As he was talking he was twisting his hands through Mocha's fur. Eventually, she meowed in protest to the rough treatment and jumped off of his lap, wandering off in the direction of Izuku's bedroom. Todoroki looked stricken.

"Don't worry, she doesn't hold grudges. I've accidentally kicked her so many times when she gets under my feet." Izuku comforted.

Todoroki nodded once before dropping his gaze to his lap. “Touya was the only one who understood what I had been through, once he was gone it wasn’t the same. The others were sympathetic, but they didn’t understand, you know?” He raised his head to meet Izuku’s eyes. “I’m glad you have the cats, knowing you aren’t alone is enough sometimes.”

Izuku didn’t know how to respond to that. He reached out and tentatively placed his hand on Todoroki's shoulder. "Do you want to come meet the other one now that you've been freed?"

Todoroki nodded.

"Espresso is an old lady now. Mic and Eraser have had her since they first moved in together straight out of UA. She mostly stays in their room sleeping, but apparently she's always been more of a lap cat. We just call her Essie though, Espresso is a bit of a mouthful." Izuku explained as he lead the way to the bedroom.

He heard Todoroki's footsteps suddenly stop behind him and when Izuku turned to see the problem he was faced with the other boy giving him a strange look. "All of your cats are named after coffee"

"Yep, can you tell we drink a lot of it here?" He asked sarcastically, opening the bedroom door. He sat down on the edge of the bed and scratched Essie under her chin. "Come here, she loves it attention."

Izuku watched as Todoroki sat down next to him. Seeing his normally stoic expression soften as he gently stroked the cat was heartwarming. "You can come round here anytime that you want to see them, or just don't want to go home."

"Thank you, Midoriya." Todoroki said softly, his gaze still trained on the cat.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for reading!

As you may have noticed the chapter count has increased again because this chapter got way too long so I had to split it. Content-wise this was the best place to put the chapter break in which is why this chapter is a little shorter than normal, sorry about that.

Next chapter will be up next Sunday

Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

Hitoshi's training begins

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

As Shouta walked into Gym Gamma he was surprised to see that Shinso was already there in his gym uniform. He had dismissed his class and left as soon as the bell rang so Shinso must have rushed out of his class to beat him here.

"Good, you're ready. Every day you'll warm up, even if I can't be here on time, and then we'll spar. Any questions?"

Shinso shook his head and Shouta had to hold back a smirk at how militantly focused the boy was. He didn't seem fazed by the amount of work doing three weeks of training in one week would be. From experience, Shouta knew that that amount of work was enough to put off anyone who wanted to be a hero for trivial reasons. Only the most determined students had the drive to push themselves through the gruelling training required.

"Go on then, we'll start with 10 laps around the gym."

Shouta leaned back against the wall to watch. From reading his student file he knew that, like himself, Shinso would need to excel in fighting completely quirkless given that there was no guarantee that the conditions for activating his quirk would be met. He had planned to focus on the boy's physical strength and fitness for now, assuming that that would be where the most improved would be required; his quirk was plenty strong as it was, so Shouta had decided to leave any quirk training for later.

Watching the boy run his sixth lap, Shouta could already tell that his initial assessment had been correct. Shinso had already started to struggle with the run, his pace had slowed and he was huffing out his breath, but he was also showing no signs of giving up. Good. He wasn't fit for the hero course if he was going to give up after the first warm up.

Once Shinso stopped in front of him he was panting hard. Shouta gave

him a curt nod, acknowledging his effort. "Good. That will get easier, don't worry. Let's get started with some basic hand to hand drills. You don't need to be able to do anything fancy at this point, but if you have a few forms that you can execute in the heat of battle you'll on par with the class. We'll finish early today so we can have a chat about any support items you might need designing before the exam."

Shouta was pleased to note that, when they started with the combat drills, it seemed that Shinso was a fast learner. With only a few corrections, he was perfectly mimicking Shouta's movements.

When Shouta was satisfied with the progress Shinso had made, he called for a water break. Shinso immediately slumped over to where he had left his water bottle and flopped to the floor.

Shouta decided to take this opportunity to attempt to talk to the kid. He followed him over and sat down against the wall besides him. There was silence for a moment while Shouta gathered his thoughts, trying to figure out the best way to approach the subject but his preparation proved unnecessary. Shinso clearly knew what was on his mind, or Izuku had given him a heads up, because he brought the subject up himself.

"I assume you want to talk to me about my home life?"

The boy had returned to avoiding his eyes but at least he seemed willing to talk.

"Yes. As a teacher I have a responsibility to safeguard my students. From what you said yesterday, and what I've seen from your file, I'm extremely concerned about what's going on at home. If there's anything wrong, I will do everything in my power to help improve your situation."

Shinso huffed, "you know that's exactly what Izuku said too." he commented dryly.

Shouta found himself at a loss as to what to say in response but after a minute Shinso continued. "They muzzle me." he said to the ground. He was picking up handfuls of sand off the training room floor and watching it run through his fingers, completely ignoring Shouta's presence.

A rush of anger swept through Shouta once he processed Shinso's words. He had to fight to keep his expression carefully neutral. There were procedures he was supposed to follow in situations like these but

his first thought was to protect this kid who reminds him so much of himself at 15.

"Why did you not want anyone to know? It's not your fault, and it doesn't make you weak to ask for help."

"I know that." His tone hardened. "Believe it or not, I know that its not my fault, but what's the point of asking for help when all that will happen is that I'll be removed from the best foster home I've been in. No one wants a kid with a villains quirk in their house. My only options are the homes who don't care, they do the bare minimum and cash the cheque. At least where I am now they don't care enough to hurt me either."

Shouta could see the tears running down his cheeks by the time he had finished speaking. Shinso roughly swiped them away with the back of his hand and Shouta felt his heart break a little as he watched this boy try to hide his tears, not because he was ashamed of them, but because he had already been taught that they would do him no good.

"Kid." He said gently, resting one hand on top of his purple hair and ruffling it slightly like he did to Izuku when he was upset. The action prompted Shinso to finally look up at him. "We can do something about this. UA has influence and there is a precedent of the school finding more appropriate placements for our students in the system. We can help, but we can't do anything without your permission."

A moment passed in which they simply stared at each other.

Eventually, Shinso nodded hesitantly. The tears were running freely down his face now that he was no longer making any effort to wipe them away.

"Do you want a hug?" Shouta offered hesitantly, unsure how else to help the boy at this stage. Now they had got his permission, the school could open a case to investigate the conditions in his foster home, and take action if the situation was as severe as Shouta had a feeling it was.

Shinso nodded, leaning in to rest his head on Shouta's shoulder where he continued to cry. Shouta wrapped his arms around the boy and it was like a dam had burst at the knowledge that he could get real help. Shouta was more than fine with his shoulder getting damp if it meant that Shinso got all of his emotions out, lord knows that the boy needed it.

Shinso pulled away once his sobbing had subsided.

"Go wash you face, kid and then we'll get back to training. I find that exercise helps when I'm upset."

As Shinso disappeared into the bathroom of the training grounds, Shouta removed his capture weapon and goggles from around his neck in preparation for their training. Drills were all well and good as a start but it couldn't replace the practical combat experience experience that sparring could. It was the fastest way to get Shinso up to the same level as the rest of the class.

Once Shinso reappeared, he raised his eyebrows at the sight of Shouta stretching inside the circle painted on the floor for exactly this purpose.

"We're going to spar. I will also only use the forms that we practised today, but I'm not going to go too easy on you. Actual fights are the best way to learn."

They stood opposite each other in the ring. "first person to land three hits on the other wins this round, you can have the first hit." Shouta instructed. Shinso nodded, but Shouta was pleased to note that the determined glint was back in his eyes.

Shinso began the fight carefully using the exact forms Shouta had just taught him. Each movement was precise and perfectly executed, albeit with a little hesitation as he struggled to remember what came next, and was faced with having to use them against a real person. That was to be expected, but Shouta had a point to make. He sidestepped Shinso's first swing, watching, waiting until his arm was completely extended and he was at his most unstable, before planting a hand on the boy's back and giving him a gentle push. He made sure to keep all of his movements slow and well-signalled, but the slight force was enough to send Shinso toppling to the ground.

"First lesson, if you are fighting someone stronger than you, use their own momentum against them. Everyone throws themselves off balance in the heat of combat, watch and learn to use that against them."

He offered Shinso his hand to help him up.

"Ok, let's go again."

The next few rounds proceeded in the same manner but Shinso never

seemed ready to give up, despite how many times he ended up on the floor.

"We'll stop there for today" Shouta said after helping Shinso off the ground from their most recent fight, "good work, go get changed and we'll chat about support gear before the bell goes."

Shinso nodded and followed his instructions. He hadn't said a word to Shouta outside of acknowledging his instructions since they had had their chat. He didn't really mind, it had been taxing on him emotionally and from what Shouta had gathered, he was the first adult Shinso had ever told about his situation. It made sense that he needed time to process everything.

When Shinso reappeared, back in his school uniform, Shouta got straight to business. If the kid didn't want to talk about his home life anymore, he would respect that.

"Right, costume wise I would suggest you keep it simple for now because the support department have only got a week to get it made." Shouta began, pulling the costume request forms out of his pocket. "I'll let you take these and you can fill in what you want but make sure to drop it off either with me, or with the support department directly by the end of the day."

Shinso nodded. He didn't seem to have anything to input so Shouta continued, "I would suggest that you get some sort of voice modifier so your quirk can be used in more situations."

Another nod.

"I would also recommend that you train with a weapon. The voice modifier will work more effectively at a distance from your opponent, and it will provide some buffer until your combat skills get better. I can only really train you in knives or my capture weapon, but if you have anything else in mind I can find someone who could teach you."

Shinso's eyes lit up. "I'd… I'd like to learn your capture weapon? If that's ok?"

"Of course it is, kid. I wouldn't have offered if it wasn't." Shouta said, jotting both the capture weapon and voice modifier down on the form. At least they wouldn't have to wait for the support department to make a new capture weapon, they always had a few spares on hand just in case Shouta needed a replacement.

For the first time since they had started, Shinso didn't look upset or anxious. Shouta counted that as a win, hoping that although it wasn't official yet, Shinso was finally realising that this was really happening.

When the bell rang, Shouta handed the form over and patted Shinso on the shoulder. "You did good today. Same time tomorrow and we'll start training with the capture weapon."

"Thank you, Aizawa-sensei. For everything." Shinso said before hurrying off in the direction of his classroom.

The rest of the week passed in much the same way. Shouta was impressed with the progress Shinso was making in his training, he was picking up the forms quickly and was able to apply them in their sparring sessions. He still had trouble improvising, preferring to stick exactly to what he had been taught rather than adapting his movements to the situation, but that would come with practice. For only having been training for four days, his improvement and dedication was incredible. If not for the mandatory exam Nezu enforced on all hero students, Shouta would have already moved the boy into the hero course.

They had also began training with the capture weapon on the second day which was slower going. From experience, Shouta knew that learning all of the manoeuvres to control the scarf took years of practice. Shinso still ended up tangling himself up in the weapon with relative frequency, but he could reliably send it out to wrap around an object and then retract, useful for restraining villains, or pulling himself up and out of danger.

Shouta watched as Shinso headed out of the training grounds. He had left the boy with instructions to continue practising his drills at home, even if it was just in his bedroom, and to try and go for a run at least every day. The USJ trip was scheduled for the following Wednesday, so they only had two lunchtime training sessions remaining, not enough time to teach anything new, but hopefully enough to consolidate what he had already learned and give him an opportunity to get used to his new hero costume before the exam.

Shouta headed back to the teacher's lounge. He didn't have any classes scheduled for this afternoon so he was planning to complete all the paperwork for Shinso's exam, and move to the hero course, in advance.

As he sat down at his desk to begin, he couldn't shake the idea that he

could be doing more to help the boy. After training on the first day, he had gone to Nezu to open an investigation into Shinso's foster family and while these things were slow going, it was becoming evident that Shinso had been correct that most potential foster families took one look at his quirk name and suddenly they couldn't take him. Shouta wanted Shinso out of that house as quickly as possible, and it was becoming increasingly more likely that he would have to be made a ward of UA. It was only a temporary solution, and meant that one of the teachers would need to take responsibility for him, but it was better than nothing until more permanent housing could be sorted. Shouta would have to talk to Hizashi, but he wanted to volunteer to be his guardian, he just wished that they didn't have to uproot the boy twice in quick succession.

Shouta refocused on his paperwork. Nothing could be done until the investigation was over anyways, this was something tangible he could do to help right now.

"Hey Shou!" Hizashi's voice jolted him out of his focus, Hizashi was supposed to be teaching at the moment. He looked up at the clock, surprised to see that an hour had passed. Hizashi laughed as he made his way over to Shouta's desk, "sorry, didn't mean to startle you. What you working on?"

"Course change paperwork for Hitoshi Shinso." He leaned back into his husband's chest as he came to stand behind his chair, closing his eyes as Hizashi began to run his fingers through his hair. "It's about the only useful thing I can do for the kid right now."

"Have they found a suitable placement for him yet?"

Shouta shook his head. "He's going to have to be taken in as a ward of the school if something doesn't come up soon."

"Would that be so bad?" Shouta looked up at him, frowning. "Obviously, it's not ideal but at least no matter which teacher volunteers to be his guardian, you know and can trust them." Hizashi explained. "I've seen how you've been acting since you started training him, Shou. You care about this kid, and you were just saying that you wanted to be able to do more for him. Why don't we offer to be his guardians?"

Shouta pulled Hizashi down to sit on his lap as he mulled the idea over. It was one thing for him to think it to himself, but it was quite another when his husband voiced the thought aloud. While it was true

that he was already attached to the boy, and wanted to help him in anyway he could but they had only just had a breakthrough with Izuku. What would introducing a new child into the household do the their family dynamics?

"I'd love to, but we've got to think about Izuku. Plus it would be better if Shinso could find a permanent home now, rather than having to move out again when a suitable foster placement is found."

"Shou, we can talk to Izuku and see if he'd be ok with it. At least we know that they already get on." Hizashi said gently. "Had you considered that we could just adopt him? That would solve the issue of him having to move again. You know that I always wanted a big family. I love you and Izuku, and would be happy with that, but you are already parenting this kid, why not make it official?"

Shouta wrapped his arms around Hizashi's waist and buried his face in his chest. Hizashi was right, he did want to take care of Shinso, to know that he was safe and happy in a good home, but was their home the right place for him? He still felt unequipped to be a parent to one teenager, and adopting Izuku had been an impulsive decision to save him from prison. This would be something different altogether. On the best of days, it still took Hizashi's prompting for him to remember to eat more than just jelly pouches. Would it not be best for Shinso to go to a home with someone more functional as a parent?

"I can practically hear you overthinking this." Hizashi leaned back slightly so he could look Shouta in the eyes, "I think we've done a pretty good job with Izuku if I do say so myself. You're a great parent, Shou. Shinso already looks up to you from what I hear, and he needs a stable home, we can give him that."

There was a beat of silence before Shouta replied. "…Ok." He relented. "We have to ask Izuku first though, if he doesn't want this to go through then it doesn't and another teacher takes Shinso in."

Hizashi nodded.

"And we give Shinso a choice. He can choose whether he wants for us to officially adopt him, or we just take him until a different option becomes available." Shouta continued. Now that he had accepted the idea of taking him in on even a temporary basis, he was hoping that the kid would want to live with them permanently, but he refused to make that decision for him. Shinso was 15, certainly old enough to have a say in where he wanted to live.

Hizashi nodded again, "Of course it should be up to the little listener. When do you want to ask him? The investigation should be done late next week right? So we need to have a decision by then."

Shouta considered the question. "If we can, I want to leave it until after the USJ trip and he's officially a member of my class. I don't want him to feel that his move is contingent on accepting the offer to live with us. He needed to make the choice free from any outside factors."

"So, next Thursday?"

Shouta nodded. "Next Thursday. And we'll ask Izuku at home tonight."

Hizashi leaned down to kiss him and Shouta felt himself melt into his husband's touch as he responded in kind. Hizashi pulled back first, resting his forehead against Shouta's. "I'm so proud of you, Shou."

"Thank you, 'Zashi. I love you."

The door slammed open then, revealing Nemuri on the other side. "You two should really get a room, you know." she said as she headed towards her desk. "I've been stood outside for *ages* waiting for you lovebirds to finish having your moment."

She laughed as Shouta shot her a quirk enhanced glare from where he was still nestled against Hizashi's chest.

"You're loosing your touch, Shouta! These kids are making you soft." Shouta couldn't help but begrudgingly smile at his friend's teasing; she wasn't wrong, and he found that he was ok with that.

Izuku was conflicted.

On one hand, he was kind of relieved when Eraser messaged him during lessons that morning to tell him he wouldn't be able to train Hitoshi at lunchtime because he was stuck handling the press at the gates. Not that he had minded spending the last week of lunches with the rest of his classmates, especially since Todoroki had also elected to join them, but it was a relief to be able to hide away again for a break.

On the other hand, as much as Izuku had come to care about Hitoshi over the past few weeks, he had been grateful that Eraser would be occupying him during lunches this week after the bombshell they had dropped on him on Friday. Izuku had expected for Hitoshi to be

removed from the hellhole he called a foster home, but he really hadn't expected for Eraser and Mic to offer to take him in. Not that it should have been a surprise in hindsight, they did have a history of taking in strays after all. Mic and Eraser had made it very clear that no matter what he decided, it would be fine.

It hadn't been hard to make his decision. The only problem now was that he couldn't tell Hitoshi anything about this.

So, he had been sort of glad that he wouldn't be having any lunchtime meetings with Hitoshi this week so he couldn't accidentally let anything slip with his muttering.

Stupid reporters ruining his plans.

And now they had resulted in him having to run to the general studies classroom before Hitoshi had a chance to leave, cursing himself for not thinking to ask for his number earlier.

By the time he skidded to a halt in front of a startled looking Hitoshi just as he was making his way out of his classroom, he was out of breath.

He exaggerated his exhaustion slightly. Holding up a finger before Hitoshi could say anything as he lent against the wall to catch his breath. Hitoshi simply raised his eyebrows at Izuku's antics.

"Care to explain why you're in such a hurry to ambush me?" he said dryly.

Izuku sent him a withering look. "Eraser sent me, he's busy dealing with the press at the gates so can't train you today." He held out his hand, "now, give me your phone."

"Why?" Despite his question, he was already digging his phone out.

"I need your number so I don't have to run half way across the school every time Eraser needs to pass a message along."

Hitoshi shrugged and began walking in the opposite direction towards their hiding place. Izuku finished exchanging their numbers, ignoring the disapproving look Cementos gave him from where he was still inside the 1-C classroom before running to catch up with Hitoshi.

"So… how's your training been going?" Izuku winced internally at the awkward opening. Of course Hitoshi already knew that Izuku likely

knew exactly how training was going from Eraser, not to mention that he was dodging the elephant in the room that was the subject of their last conversation. Izuku didn't want to stray anywhere near the topic of the investigation, or Hitoshi's living situation if he could help it. He had already proven that he couldn't keep secrets from the other boy, and he really didn't want to slip up this time when it wasn't his secret to tell. Eraser and Mic would do a much better job at breaking the news to him *after* his exam and Izuku didn't want to risk ruining that. So, safe topics only.

"It's intense, but I can't really complain. At least because we're only a few weeks into school I'm not too far behind. It's more than I could have hoped for to be given a second chance to make it onto the hero course this early."

"You do deserve to become a hero, you know that right? Your goals are more admirable than most of the students already on the hero course."

Hitoshi shrugged as he pulled the door open and stepped through, pulling it closed again behind Izuku. "I don't know, I'm going to chase this dream as long as I can but speaking realistically, who's gonna want to be saved by someone who can brainwash them?"

"Who wants to be saved by a quirkless hero either, or by someone who can take their quirk away? In my experience, people who need saving don't care who does it, they'll think you're a hero no matter what."

Izuku was grateful that Hitoshi didn't question what his *experience* entailed. He was likely imagining Izuku on the other end of the scenario, given what Izuku had told him about his past.

Hitoshi opened his mouth to reply but before he could say anything he was cut off by a loud alarm sounding.

They both looked at each other in confusion. On the first day of school, all students are briefed on UA's many different alarms and their meanings. The one currently blaring was the one indicating that the campus had been breached by an unauthorised person or persons. How they had overcome the infamous UA barrier, Izuku didn't know, but it couldn't be good news.

Hitoshi made to open the door again, but stops when Izuku help up his hand. He strained his ears, listening past the alarm for any sounds of danger coming from the corridor outside. There's silence, and then a surge of footsteps and panicked voices coming down the stairs above

them. Presumably students evacuating from the floor above, but judging from the sounds of the chaos, there was no one there to guide them, or control the situation. Surely if villains were attacking a hero school it would be natural to think that the students were the targets and there would be teachers present. Izuku couldn't help but spin through the worst case scenarios in his head.

"I don't think it's villains" Izuku lied, sitting back down and motioned for Hitoshi to do the same.

Hitoshi wavered by the door for a few moments longer, anxiety at breaking the school's safety regulations written all over his face. "Are you sure? Maybe we should evacuate with everyone else just to be safe?"

"Pretty sure. There would be at least a few teachers guarding the students if it was a villain attack, since there aren't any outside I'm assuming it's something else. Maybe one of the reporters from this morning have some kind of quirk that got them past the barrier, I don't know. Just speculating." Izuku shrugged. "Plus, you'd never get the door open anyways with how many people are out there."

Hitoshi appeared to see the sense in his words as he sat down next to Izuku without further protest. "I guess we'll just wait for the teachers to sort it out then." He agreed.

Izuku was still tense, but was trying not to show it for fear of worrying his friend. As far as he was aware, the UA barrier had never been breached since it had been built. There had to be more to this than some over-enthusiastic reporters. Izuku had carefully positioned himself so he had easy access to the spare knife that he always had tucked into his shoe, and so Hitoshi was forced to sit further away from the door. Everyone in the corridor were sitting ducks for any villains that may want to attack them. At least they were hidden in here, and if a villain did happen to open the door, well, Izuku wasn't going to go down without a fight at least.

The alarm continued to ring, and the shouting from the corridor got more frantic as more and more people piled into the too-small corridor in an attempt to get to the evacuation point. The only positive that that there was no screams of fear, just panic, so he could safely conclude that there was no immediate threat outside the door.

Izuku was so intently listening to what was happening outside that he jumped slightly when Hitoshi started speaking from behind him. "So…

I heard from Aizawa that you had a little date with Todoroki last week." He had a shit eating grin on his face.

The whiplash was almost too much for Izuku to handle. After being on such high alert, he was so caught off guard by Hitoshi's words that he couldn't even muster a response. His gaping expression must have been absolutely hilarious because as soon as he turned around, Hitoshi burst into laughter.

"Aww, does someone have a little crush on Todoroki?"

Izuku could feel that his face was burning red. He looked away quickly turning back towards the door before replying. "No! He just…" He trailed off not really knowing where he was going with that.

All of a sudden the alarm cut off and Nezu's voice sounded from over the school's intercom. "The intrusion has been dealt with. All students are to return to their classrooms immediately."

Izuku allowed himself to relax and move his hand away from his stowed knife.

"Izu~" Hitoshi drawled out teasingly, not noticing the change in Izuku's posture.

Izuku slumped, huffing out a breath. "Fine. Yes. I like Todoroki. Happy now?"

"Very"

"Come on, we should be getting back to our classrooms." Izuku climbed to is feet and offered Hitoshi his hand to help him up from where he was still practically doubled over on the ground, laughing at Izuku's misfortune.

Once Hitoshi took his pro-offered hand and had been hauled to his feet, Izuku didn't let go. He used his leverage to pull Hitoshi in close to him and adopted his sweetest, most innocent grin. "If you tell Todoroki, I'll kill you."

Hitoshi grinned in return, not looking perturbed in the slightest. "Noted"

Izuku pulled open the door, pleased to see that the corridor was now mostly empty again. He waved over his shoulder. "See you on Wednesday, 'Toshi"

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for reading!

It's my birthday today so that's fun.

Bit of a longer chapter for you this week, the next chapter might be delayed by an extra week because it's my last week of lectures at uni next week so I won't have much time to write. If chapter 9 is finished by next Sunday I'll post it but if not it will be up on December 14th!
All the usj stuff will be in chapter 9 no matter how long it gets but if it gets ridiculous there might be a short extra chapter at the end as a semi-epilogue setting up the next arc. If it's not too long the next chapter will be the last for this arc, we'll see.

Chapter 9

Chapter Summary

USJ time!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Shouta rested his head against the bus window and closed his eyes, hoping he would be able to get at least a few more minutes of sleep in, but knowing it was unlikely in a bus full of excited teenagers. They hadn't settled down since he had announced the trip to the USJ earlier that week. Mercifully, beyond the expected level of giddiness, they seemed to be behaving themselves, leaving Shouta time to relax before class properly began while keeping an ear out for trouble.

When the bus finally pulled up outside the USJ facility, the awe on the kid's faces as they caught their first glimpse of the famous rescue grounds in person was enough to make Shouta hide a smile in his capture weapon. Even Izuku looked impressed, despite how much he was trying to hide the fact.

The only person not focused on the sight in front of them was Shinso. He was standing slightly apart from the rest of the group, eyes flitting between his soon-to-be classmates anxiously as though he expected them to attack him at any moment. They had accepted his presence on the trip easily enough when Shouta had explained that he was a hero course candidate, and had done their best to make him feel welcome in their over-enthusiastic way. Shouta had been about to step in to tell them to knock it off when he had seen how uncomfortable the boy was with the barrage of questions but it hadn't been necessary. Izuku had moved himself from where he had seemingly been asleep, splayed across a double seat, to sit next to Shinso. He had told them to shut it, before laying his head on Shinso's shoulder and returning to his nap. Shouta had had to feign a coughing fit to hide his laughter in the face of Shinso's baffled expression.

Shouta waited until he caught Shinso's eye before giving him a subtle nod. He was pleased to see his straighten his posture in response.

"Right, shut it." He called the class to attention, "I expect each and every one of you to try your hardest today. Be respectful to Thirteen,

and don't slack just because it's rescue training. This is arguably the most important aspect of hero work, don't forget that. Anyone not trying their hardest will be expelled."

The few nods and calls of "yes sir" were enough confirmation that they had listened to his warning before leading them inside.

Thirteen was waiting to greet them by the entrance and shot Shouta a confused look when they took note of All Might's absence. He just shook his head, holding up three fingers to let them know that he wasn't coming. Thirteen nodded in understanding before moving to welcome the class, while Shouta positioned himself against the wall where he could keep an eye on the class.

While he was miffed that Nezu had ignored his complaints against All Might's continued employment as a teacher, he could say he was particularly angry that the man had to miss this particular lesson. Not only was All Might not primarily a rescue hero, Shouta didn't want him anywhere near his Problem Child after the last practical class with All Might had ended with him in the hospital. Shouta had only volunteered to supervise this trip in the first place so his could keep an eye on what All Might was teaching, and it was a good thing he had because the whole trip would have been cancelled if there wasn't another teacher available when the oaf called out this morning.

A lurching feeling in his gut snapped him to attention.

Something was very wrong.

Over a decade of working as a pro hero had taught him to always trust his instincts and right now his instincts were screaming at him to get everyone out of the building.

He threw a glance over the group of students, finding nothing amiss. Izuku was tensed, ready to spring into action at a moment's notice, mask already in place over his mouth and hand straying to hover over where his staff was attached to his belt. The rest of the class were still enraptured by Thirteen's monologue, oblivious to whatever was about to happen.

Shouta was about to call out a warning, to tell them to leave and gather at the evacuation point when the lights went out. The sound of the bulbs shattering seemed deafening in the vast space.

Shouts of shock and surprise sounded behind him as he turned to face the centre of the room. The glass skylight leaving the central plaza the

only area still properly lit, and throwing into stark relief when dark mist began to coalesce.

Villains began to pour into the central plaza.

Shouta pulled his goggles up and was moving before the mist-like portal had even closed. He heard Izuku's staff snap out to full length behind him. Risking taking his eyes off the approaching villains, he turned back to glance at his Problem Child.

"Don't even think about it, kid." he warned. He didn't want Izuku jumping into the fight at the first sign of danger. Fighting back in self defence was one thing, but a student leading the attack in front of this many witnesses could result in expulsion, or worse, legal action. Shouta didn't need anyone rooting around in Izuku's files.

He was halfway down the steps when the mist portal closed, pulling together into a humanoid figure in formal wear. The way the mist moved tugged at something in the back of Shouta's mind, but he shook it off, more preoccupied with the person that the mist man was flanking.

He was lanky, with scruffy grey-ish blue hair that looked like it hadn't seen a brush in a long while, and dressed all in black. Most disturbingly, he had what appeared to be severed hands gripping onto his body and face, obscuring his features. Shouta didn't want to examine whether they were real or not. He was clearly the leader of the group. As soon as he had stepped out of the portal, the villains stopped their approach, waiting for instructions.

Shouta stopped too, waiting to see what they would do.

The leader didn't move.

There was a tense moment of stillness before the mist man spoke. "We are the League of Villains." He introduced.

The whole building lapsed back into silence, no one willing to break the stalemate and begin the fight.

All of a sudden, the leader burst into manic laughter. Even his subordinates seemed confused by his strange behaviour. "You cheaters!" He exclaimed from between gasping breaths, "you've locked the final boss behind an extra mini-boss."

Shouta frowned. All Might must be the final boss, given his absence,

but who was the extra mini-boss?

"Verdant" the leader continued, no longer laughing now, "I didn't know you had gotten yourself captured by heroes."

Shit.

At least that answered that question. Since it looked like the villains wouldn't attack until ordered, Shouta looked back at his class to see their reactions the revelation at a well-known vigilante was in their midst.

Izuku hadn't moved, still at the front of the rest of the group, poised to strike. With the notable exceptions of Tokoyami and Todoroki, all eyes were on him. So confirmation that Verdant was there was all it had taken for them to figure it out. Shouta sighed internally before turning his attention back to the villains, he could deal with the fallout of *that* later. Right now he just needed to get his whole class out of this alive.

The leader looked disappointed at the lack of response from Izuku. Shouta could sense the moment his amusement faded into bloodlust. It seemed the other villains could sense it too, they started to approach again, and Shouta ran to meet them.

He would not let them hurt these students.

"Kurogiri." He heard the leader call out over the sounds of the battle. "Scatter them, and put Verdant somewhere he can't interfere."

Shouta lashed his capture weapon around one of the bigger villains in the group, using him as an anchor to swing himself around so he had a clear view of the group of students at the top of the stairs.

He made an aborted motion towards them that was quickly blocked by other villains. He was stuck. The waves of villains seemed almost unending, no matter how many he dispatched, more always seemed to step up to take their place and attempting to inch the fight towards his students would take too long. He could only watch helplessly as the mist man appeared suddenly behind them.

The next time he could steal a glance in their direction his heart dropped. Majority of the kids were gone, and he could see the shape of Thirteen's white suit crumpled on the ground, unmoving.

Izuku stumbled as the dark mist receded from his vision, but caught

himself quickly. A quick glance at his surrounding told him he wasn't imagining the gentle swaying of the ground beneath his feet.

He was on a boat, completely alone other than the villains in the water surrounding the boat.

For a group who had thought that breaking into UA of all places was a good idea, they were smarter than Izuku had originally given them credit for. Strategically speaking, if he had access to a teleportation quirk, this was exactly what he would have done in their situation: occupy the teachers and isolate the only known threat amongst the students.

Izuku didn't know how he felt about being recognisable enough for the leader of the villains to instantly identify him, even despite the changes to his costume, but there was nothing he could do now. He also didn't want to think about the betrayed look Hitoshi had given him. The rest of the class had either known or already had their suspicions whereas Hitoshi had been visibly confused as to who was being addressed until everyone had looked at Izuku. He hadn't meant to keep it from the other boy, he already knew all of Izuku's much better kept secrets after all, it just hadn't come up.

He could hear distant sounds of fights breaking out in the different areas of the building, presumably his classmates fending off the villains in their own areas. Those in his area hadn't moved, seeming more preoccupied with making sure he stayed put, than outright attacking him. The shore of the artificial ocean designating the edge of the shipwreck zone opened directly onto the central plaza where he could occasionally catch a glimpse of Eraser amongst the crowd of villains there.

For now, Izuku had to figure out how to get off of this damned boat.

As Verdant, he had never particularly trained in any sort of long ranged weapon. The fights he was typically in benefited from a specialisation in close combat due to the confined nature of alleyways, and unfortunately it appeared that the leader knew this.

All he had on him was his staff, pockets full of flashbangs and smoke bombs, and a dozen or so tranq darts. Nothing there could help him deal with the villains surrounding the boat. He would have to get creative, and then seriously think about upgrading his gear once the villains were all taken care of.

The water itself also presented a problem. While it was likely only just

deep enough for the boat to be afloat so they didn't have to completely dreg it back up every time they ran the shipwreck simulation, it was still much too deep for Izuku to be able to stand in. He had vague memories of weekly swimming lessons from *before* but hadn't been in any body of water since. All he could really do was hope that he remembered enough to not drown and get himself to the shore because he didn't have any other options.

That was a problem for future Izuku though, the villains had to be dealt with first.

He took himself for a walk around the deck of the boat, adopting a bright smile and waving at some of the very confused looking villains as he passed them. Mentally, he was counting how many there were, and making guesses at a few potential quirks while he was at it, if he could make them underestimate him even a little bit then that was just an added bonus.

So, 12 villains in total, all with water based quirks if Izuku had to guess, and all looking somewhat annoyed. As the leader himself hadn't expected Verdant to be present, he had probably changed the orders for this lot just before Izuku was warped here. Of course, it was possible that all the villains were just supposed to be holding the students captive and out of the way but that seemed unlikely. Even if All Might was the target, breaking into, and killing some students from the most famous hero school in the country was sure to make an impact. They weren't likely to pass up that opportunity now that they were already inside.

Izuku sat down in the centre of the boat and pulled all of his equipment out of his pockets. He needed a plan.

Temporarily blinding the villains wouldn't do him much good. He was pretty certain at least a few of them would have some kind of echo location or water manipulation quirk, in which case they would be able to sense him swimming past even if they couldn't physically see. He was confident with his staff but it wouldn't do him much good in underwater combat.

That left him with two options. Either he could attempt to lure them onto the boat and fight them hand to hand, or he could try to hit them with his tranq darts. Neither seemed like particularly good options. He wasn't confident that he could bait any, let alone all of them, into coming out of water given that they all appeared to have the advantage there, nor was he confident that he could hit every villain

with a dart on the first try. He had one dart per villain and definitely didn't like those odds.

Although, maybe he didn't have to hit them with the dart themselves.

Izuku pulled out his notebook. He had jotted down all the information about his new gear that the support department had altered just in case he needed it when he was out and about, and he vaguely recalled something about the strength of the tranq darts. When he had first opened the box of darts, he had been shocked that the school had given him permission to carry them as they had come with an explicit warning not to use them in training because they were industrial strength tranquillizers. One dart was enough to drop someone for a week if they got the full dose, and even a small amount entering the body was enough to incapacitate an opponent. Izuku hoped that also applied to ingesting it by mouth.

If he could pour the tranquillizer into the water, he had a chance. There was a distinct possibly that the tranquillizer wouldn't be concentrated enough in the water but it was the best plan he had. If it failed, he could try something else. He was *fairly* confident that the villains wouldn't disobey a direct order from their boss and attack him, even if he made the first move.

Tucking everything else back away into their correct pockets, leaving out only the darts and his notebook, Izuku stood. Careful not get any of the liquid on his hands, he smashed the top of the vials off and went for another lap around the deck of the boat. For the best chance for this insane plan to work, he needed to get the tranquillizers close to each villain so they would get the highest dose possible.

He stopped in front of each villain, making his actions look as casual as possible he leaned over the railing and poured a vial into the water. Luckily most of the villains seemed uninterested in their guard duty and had mostly turned to talk to each other instead of watching him as closely as Izuku suspected they should be. Well, he wasn't going to complain. If any of them suspected him of doing anything, they didn't show it, or make any moves to attack him.

Apparently, they were more scared of their leader than of Izuku.

Big mistake.

Once all of the vials had been emptied into he water, Izuku returned to the centre of the boat where none of the villains could see him if he was sitting. Now it was just a waiting game to see if the tranquillizer

would take effect.

Izuku stripped out of his jacket and utility belt, shoving his staff and a few flashbangs into his trouser pockets. Given his lack of confidence in water, he figured that it was probably best to shed some weight. After a moment of contemplation, he also removed his shoes. While he didn't particularly like the idea of potentially going into battle without his shoes, the steel toes in them would be more of a hindrance while swimming than they would help him in battle. Everything he was leaving behind were folded and placed in a neat pile on the deck with his notebook where he could hopefully retrieve them after the battle. Other than his undershirt and trousers, the only part of his costume he kept in place was his mask, figuring that the filter on it would maybe keep the tranquillizer out of his mouth. It was a long shot, but all he could do was hope that he wouldn't just end up knocking himself out along with the villains.

Feeling as prepared as he could, Izuku moved to lean over the railing again. From this vantage point, he could keep an eye on the villains and their reactions, but nothing seemed to be happening yet. He cast his gaze back towards the land. The group of villains in the central plaza had thinned, but Izuku could see that the Eraser's movements were also slowing. The leader and the monstrous, hulking figure next to him hadn't moved, still stood watching Eraser struggle against the hoard of villains. Further off in the distance, a large structure of ice was poking over the artificial mountain in the landslide zone.

Izuku could feel tears welling up in his eyes at the face of his helplessness. Eraser and the rest of his classmates were all fighting for their lives while he was being held captive, unable to even directly fight the villains guarding him.

Movement in the water pulled his attention back. Izuku scrubbed his eyes dry, not quite believing that his plan was working as he watched one villain’s head slip under the water. A startled yell sounded from the other side of the boat as more villains succumbed to the tranquillizer. There was nothing they could do; they had realised that something was wrong too late.

Once all of the villains between the boat and shore had sunk beneath the surface, Izuku backed away from the railing. He couldn't think about the fate of the villains who didn't have gill mutations, couldn't let the stab of guilt stop him.

He had had no choice.

Before he could dwell too much on the consequences of his actions, he took a running leap off the side of the boat, launching himself off of the railing to get as far from the boat as possible.

The water was shockingly cold.

Izuku could feel his heart beating hard in his chest as he fought his instinctive reaction to gasp. He was surrounded by a swirl of white bubbles, and once they cleared Izuku was completely disoriented. With the main lights of the building out, the water was murkier than he had anticipated. Every direction he looked was just an expanse of dark, inky blue, and no sign of which way was up.

Izuku had to shake himself out of his panic; he was going to drown if he didn't think.

He stilled, forcing himself to focus before a stream of small bubbles caught his attention. They were pointing the way up.

Despite knowing which was to go now, getting to the surface still wasn't easy. His lungs burned as he clawed his way up. He could feel the water tugging on his clothes, dragging him further and further down despite his best efforts.

He almost gave up. There was nothing to tell him whether he was making progress or not until abruptly his head broke the surface.

Izuku gasped in a breath.

Now that he could breathe, he realised that the area around his mouth was completely dry. The support department really had gone above and beyond in making his mask. It was completely water tight, therefore protecting him from the tranquillizer in the water. He couldn't believe his luck.

He began swimming towards the shore, not giving himself time to catch his breath properly. He didn't know how long the unconscious villains would be out for.

Despite the fact that swimming underwater would probably be faster, and draw less attention, Izuku didn't dare to push his luck. He wanted out of this water and back on dry land as soon as possible. He kept his head up, not wanting to risk getting turned around and loosing progress.

His limbs burned with the exertion of the unfamiliar movement as he

slowly made his way to shore. All he could feel was the burn of his muscles and the almost painful bite of the cold.

It was so cold that when he felt a sudden pressure close around his leg, he initially just tried to shake it off, not thinking anything more of it.

And then the pain hit.

Izuku gasped as the blinding pain broke through the cold induced numbness. He twisted, kicking out and connected with whatever was currently holding his leg in a vice grip. It wasn't enough to shake off his assailant, slowed by the water as it was.

He felt a tug on his injured leg and had just enough awareness to take a deep breath before he was dragged under the water's surface. Between the blur from the salt water in his eyes, and the darkness he could only just make out the silhouette of a man with a shark head, whose jaws were tightly closed around Izuku's leg. The dead black spots that were the villain's eyes looked glassy, glazed over as though he was only half-conscious of his actions.

Acting purely on instinct from the terror of the situation, Izuku pulled his staff out and extended it in the villain's face. The small end shooting out with the force of the mechanism hit the villain squarely in the eye.

His hands flew up to cover the injury before Izuku could see the damage at the same time as his jaw released its grip on Izuku's leg in surprise. Izuku wasted no time in pulling his leg free of the mouth, catching himself again on one of the serrated teeth in his haste and ripping the bottom of his trouser leg off in the process. He yanked himself completely out of the villain's grasp, pulling as hard as he could at the water to fight his was back to the surface.

Daring a glance back, he could make out the dark shape of his attacker completely still and rapidly sinking towards the floor, a thin trail of blood visible streaming from his eye.

Izuku thanked whatever god must be protecting him today for his good fortune. The tranquillizer had done its job.

He gritted his teeth when he saw how much progress he had lost while being dragged around underwater and began the slow, agonising swim back to shore.

Shouta's eyes burned behind his googles, tears welling up in his eyes from overuse of his quirk. He is whole body ached from exertion and the various hits he had taken that he was sure must be blooming into bruises, but he couldn't afford to stop. He had lost track of how long he had been fighting, how long it had been since he had seen the doors fly open behind the mist man and heard the revving of Iida's engines as he took the opening.

Help was on its way.

Shouta just had to hold on a little longer. He still had to protect his kids.

As the crowd of villains thinned, Shouta became more aware of the glare of the leader following his every movement from behind the hand that was completely obscuring his features. There was no malice in the gaze. It was more calculated, curious, and it had the hairs on the back of Shouta's neck standing on end from being studied so closely.

The strange figure next to him was even more unnerving. In contrast with his boss, his gaze was almost inhumanly blank, as though he wasn't even aware of what was happening in front of him. He was stock still, and his exposed brain had made Shouta's stomach flip when he had realised what he was looking at.

But he couldn't afford to worry about them right now.

The wall of ice that had shot up in the landslide zone, and the distant sounds of explosions told Shouta that his kids were still alive and fighting. He had to ensure that they all got home safely.

Time slipped away from him as he refocused on his fight, slipping into almost a flow state as he pushed himself to keep going, despite the exhaustion and pain that threatened to consume him.

The end was finally in sight. There were only a handful of villains remaining surrounding him.

He flipped up and over one of the bigger guys, dodging both his punch and another villain he had noticed who was charging at him from behind. The two careened into each other with Shouta out of the way, knocking each other out.

Three remaining.

He rushed towards the villain closest to him who appeared to be able to grow needle-sharp spines from her body. He cancelled her quirk just as he got within knife range, using the moment of hesitation to bring the handle of his knife down on the top of her head.

Two remaining.

The final pair appeared to be twins judging from how similar they looked. The taller of the two threw a glance at their leader to see if he would step in, but seeing no movement, shared a nod with his brother as they both closed in on Shouta. They were perfectly in sync, clearly used to fighting together. When Shouta dodged one strike, the other was ready to land a blow in the space he had moved into. They moved as one, not seeming to use any quirks, having learnt from watching him take down so many of their allies.

Eventually Shouta saw an opening. If they were forcing him to dodge in a particular direction for the other to land a blow, then he could predict their movements too. On the next punch aimed straight towards him, instead of moving into the available space, he let it land. He felt at least one rib crack from the force of the blow, and it left him winded and gasping to regain his breath but he didn't left that stop him from acting. He swung his knife out into the space he would have dodged into and hit the brother's wrist with his blade. The knife struck bone and both brothers cried out in pain.

No wonder they were so synchronised, at least one of their quirks must psychically link them, allowing them to hear one another thoughts, and also each other's pain. Shouta didn't hesitate to act on the new information. He landed a neat blow with his elbow to the face of the injured one and blood gushed from his nose. Two more quick, sharp jabs to his face and head had him on the floor before he could think about fighting back. Their quirk's weakness did the rest of Shouta's job for him. The other brother collapsed in a dead faint alongside his twin with not a scratch on him.

Zero remaining.

Shouta stood among the pile of bodies, chest heaving, and turned his attention onto the leader. There was a moment of calm as they sized each other up across the bloodied plaza.

It felt as though even the air and the sounds of the students battling died down as they stared at each other, waiting for someone to make the first move.

In the time between one blink and the next, the stillness exploded into a flurry of movement as the leader rushed towards Shouta. He closed the gap between them startlingly fast, and all Shouta could do was will his battered body into moving out of the way of the hand grasping towards his eyes.

Shouta was so battered that it felt like his thoughts were moving though syrup. All of his attention was focused on avoiding the villain's hands that it took an embarrassingly long time to realise that he was counting down to when Shouta had to blink.

A rush of icy fear gripped him. Besides Izuku, who was a genius when it came to quirk analysis, no one else had ever figured out how his quirk worked just through observation before. He had severely underestimated the group's leader.

He stumbled.

In slow motion he saw the villain's open palm approaching him but could do nothing to prevent it from making contact. The most he could manage was to raise his arm so it closed around that instead of his face.

Where the leader's fingers touched felt as though his nerves had been set alight.

He gritted his teeth to keep from crying out at the shock of pain that was unlike anything he had felt before. He could see what looked like dust falling from the wound, and could feel the decayed area creeping deeper the long the villain held on.

Shouta pushed all of his body weight towards the villain, twisting his arm out of that deadly grip.

The leader let him go, not even attempting to follow him as he retreated back a few steps. Shouta got the impression that he was grinning beneath the hand, that this was just a game to him. He wasn't fighting to kill, he just wanted to see if he could get around Shouta's quirk. It was surprisingly childish.

"Hey. You're gonna have to try harder than that if you want me out the way." A familiar voice broke their standoff.

Shouta looked over to see his Problem Child standing at the water's edge. He looked worse for wear, dripping wet, missing half of his costume, and leaving a puddle of blood on the ground at his feet,

pouring out of an angry looking wound at his ankle. The lower half of his face was still covered by his mask, but what Shouta could see of his face was contorted with fury. None of the playful spark was present in his eyes. They were flat and hardened with anger. Out of everything that Shouta had seen today, this was by far the most disturbing. Seeing the kid who had been cracking jokes and trying to comfort *them* even while he was on the brink of death in this state was devastating. Shouta never wanted to see that expression on his face again.

The leader turned his attention towards Izuku, completely ignoring Shouta as though he didn't even consider him a threat anymore. Before Shouta could even think to attack his turned back the leader spoke up.

"Nomu, restrain him." he ordered.

Faster than he could process what had happened, Shouta found himself being slammed viciously into the ground. He strained his neck to keep the villain and Izuku within his line of sight. It was as if he was being held down by steel for all the good it did for him to struggle, but he didn't have to move to use his quirk.

"Verdant" the villain rasped, "I put you out of the way for your own good, I didn't want to hurt a fellow villain after all. We could work together."

Izuku let out a dry laugh, no mirth to be found in his tone. "You're delusional if you think I would join you after you attacked my family and class"

"What a shame. You're just another hero brat then"

Before he had finished speaking he was charging towards Izuku. Shouta could only watch in horror as he fumbled to open his staff, reactions slowed by blood loss. Just before his hand connected, Shouta activated his quirk.

The leader turned back to him. Red eyes visible between the fingers of his hand mask, bright with glee as he realised why his quirk wasn't working.

"You really are so cool, Eraserhead!"

While his attention was on Shouta, Izuku took the opportunity, swinging his staff up between them to knock away the hand that was

mere inches from his face. Shouta allowed himself to blink once Izuku wasn't in immediate danger, preparing to use his quirk again at a moment's notice.

"Nomu. Knock him out. I want to talk to Verdant without interruptions."

The last thing Shouta was aware of was Izuku running to his aid, too far away to prevent the inevitable. He activated his quirk one last time as the leader moved to strike Izuku's undefended back while he was distracted, before his head was slammed into the ground hard and blackness consumed him.

Izuku ran forwards as soon as he processed the words, ignoring the villain's presence between them.

He couldn't loose another parent.

The only warning he got of the incoming attack was Eraser's eyes flashing red. There was no force behind the blow, just an open palm placed on his shoulder and the absence where a quirk should have activated. He ducked out of the hand's grasp and continued his mad dash towards Eraser, blindly swinging his staff behind him at the leader. He watched in horror as Nomu ground Eraser's head into the ground, helpless to do anything to prevent it.

He rounded on the leader once again when the Nomu stood after completing his orders, he didn't seem interested in harming Eraser further at least.

"What the fuck do you want to talk to me about? I've already told you that I won't join you, and for the record, I'm not a villain." Izuku readied his staff, shifting his weight onto his good leg so he could spring into action at a moment's notice. He had already figured that the villain had some kind of five point activation quirk, and judging by Eraser's reactions when his hands had got anywhere near Izuku, it was a dangerous one.

"Vigilante. Villain. It's all semantics at the end of the day. We're both acting outside the constraints of what society say is 'right'."

"So you want to reform society? That sounds like more of a vigilante thing."

"Nah" the leader shrugged, "I just want to destroy it all."

He lunged forwards, palm outstretched. Izuku dodged to the left, swinging his staff into the space he was previously standing in. The villain was *fast,* he changed his target at the last second, grabbing onto the staff.

It crumbled to dust in his hand.

Izuku panicked and jumped backwards out of the range of the follow-up strike, once again aimed at his body.

He landed on his injured leg and it crumpled beneath him. There was nothing he could do to prevent himself from collapsing to the floor in a heap.

"Nomu. Hold him."

Izuku frantically tried to pick himself up but his leg once again slipped out from underneath him, apparently the shark villain had done more damage than he had initially thought. His head was spinning, probably from the alarming amount of blood that was pouring out of the ragged gashes around his ankle. He was helpless.

Helpless to save Eraser.

Helpless to even save himself.

He didn't resist as Nomu clamped his upper arms to his sides and dragged him into a standing position before his boss. He knew there was no point, Eraser hadn't been able to struggle out of this hold, he had no chance.

With his head bowed, Izuku could see the villain's red shoes approaching.

"I didn't expect you to give up so easily, Verdant. You were a boring boss fight."

He stopped.

He was close enough that even with his arms pinned, Izuku could reach out and touch him.

Izuku waited to see what he would do; he knew there was very little chance of him making it out of this alive, but if he could keep the villain distracted until the heroes could arrive then maybe Eraser had a chance of making it home alive.

They couldn't both die and leave Mic alone.

The villain suddenly wrapped one hand around Izuku's mask, one finger raised, and jerked his head up so Izuku was forced to face him.

From this distance there was no doubt that the hands covering his body were real, no one would go to the lengths required to make something so horrifyingly realistic. Manic red eyes were visible from between the fingers clutching at his face, eyes that were lit with a fevered excitement. Izuku had to steel himself to avoid glancing away, there was something in him that revolted against holding that gaze.

"You know, there's lots of speculation online about just who has been causing such chaos in the underground over the last couple of years. I hate mysteries, they're so annoying. I want to know before you die."

Izuku realised what his was going to do a moment before he acted.

Just as the villain lowered his final finger, Izuku reached to retrieve the knife from his forearm sheath and swung it in as big of an arc that he could manage. He couldn't reach very far but the villain clearly hadn't expected him to fight back. He had chosen to stand so close that he still had to jump back to avoid the blade slicing into his stomach.

He was too slow to prevent his mask from being decayed. It turned to foul tasting dust that still got into Izuku's mouth despite his best effort to not inhale. Without it, he felt strangely naked, exposed.

Izuku once again looked up to meet the villain's eyes, forcing himself to not look as scared as he felt.

The villain had frozen in his tracks.

Izuku had always considered himself fairly plain looking, there was nothing in his features that would warrant that reaction.

The shock visible in the villain's eyes transformed into glee as Izuku watched.

A sudden bark of laughter ripped its way out of the villain's mouth. It sounded genuinely amused in contrast to his earlier outburst.

"Of course!" He shouted, "of course you're Verdant!"

Izuku frowned, baffled at how this villain could possibly recognise

him, seemingly unconnected to his persona as Verdant. He knew the online forums the villain had spoken about. They had no clues towards his identity, he had made sure of it.

The villain was still laughing to himself when the doors crashed open.

Izuku couldn't see who had arrived, pinned as he was, but when he heard All Might's booming voice calling out his catch phrase he sagged with relief.

"Nomu, get rid of him."

The world span around Izuku as he tumble through the air, coming to a sharp stop as he crashed into the wall of one of the enclosed disaster zones. Pain bloomed all across his back, and blood filled his mouth.

He blinked.

Looking back towards the plaza, All Might was there now, wrestling with Nomu. They looked to be locked into a stalemate.

He blinked.

The warp villain had reappeared and All Might had Nomu pinned, but was rapidly sinking into one of the portals.

He blinked.

Todoroki was by his side. His mouth was moving but Izuku couldn't hear anything he was saying past the rushing of blood in his head. He tried to smile. To reassure him that he would be ok. Todoroki just looked worried.

He blinked.

He was being lifted by someone. Gunshots rang out and he saw the leader crumpled on the ground for a second before he was swallowed by purple mist. He heard Mic's quirk enhanced voice screaming his name.

He let his eyes flutter closed.

Chapter End Notes

> I’m so proud of this chapter. This was the thing I’ve been looking forward to writing since I started this fic, and I genuinely think some of my best bits of prose are in here.

The next (and final) chapter will just be a short epilogue before this series goes on a short hiatus while I work on my uni assignments.

Please tell me what to think and thank you for reading!

Chapter 10

Chapter Summary

Epilogue - Shigaraki post-USJ

Chapter Notes

Posting this early to make up for how short it is. Hope you enjoy this final update to Something Green Still Grows!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Tomura sagged on the floor of the bar, ignoring Kurogiri's report to Sensei. Neither man hadn't even taken a second to ask him if he was okay.

They didn't care.

They only cared that he had failed.

It wasn't even his fault, the stupid Nomu hadn't been strong enough and now he was dealing with the consequences of going along with the stupid plan. Yes he wanted All Might dead, he was the symbol of everything wrong with society, but they didn't have to attack the students to accomplish that. Tomura knew first hand how hero society spat out kids who didn't conform to what was expected. They could've recruited some of those hero brats once they saw the truth of the system they were fighting to defend. Instead Sensei had insisted that he kill as many of the kids as possible. He couldn't say no.

The telltale sound of Sensei disconnecting the call pulled him back to the present as Kurogiri placed a first aid box and a glass of water next to him before retreating back behind the bar.

Tomura dug through it, pulling out some painkillers and downing them. Those fucking bullet wounds hurt like a bitch, of course Kurogiri had to let him get shot before warping them out. Nothing like pain to teach a lesson after all.

He threw the glass against the wall next to Kurogiri.

The man didn't flinch. Didn't say anything. He just silently picked up a broom to clean up the mess.

Tomura fumed silently at the lack of response, contemplating just laying down to sleep where he was. Kurogiri would never get the blood stains out of the wood.

He decided the small act of pettiness wasn't worth being stiff and sore the next day. Not wanting to be around either of his guardians any longer, he dragged himself off of the floor.

The wound on his shoulder flared with pain as he stretched it to push himself up. It was going to need bandaging at least, better he take care of it now than allowing Sensei to order the Doctor to look at it. Sensei always assured him that his visits to the Doctor were for his own good but something about the man always made his skin crawl, if he could avoid an extra visit he would.

He grabbed the first aid kit and took it with him, stamping up the stairs and slamming his door in a fit of teenage rebellion that no one bothered to react to.

Tomura sat down hard on his desk chair, exhausted just from the short journey up the stairs and systematically removed all of the hands from his body, throwing them haphazardly into the corner of the room. He hated those things, and hated even more that he couldn't get rid of them. The only one he took more care with was Father, placing him back on his shelf before turning his attention back to his injuries.

He could feel the blood oozing out of them as he moved. The best he could do was grit his teeth as he cleaned and bandaged them to the best of his abilities. He would definitely need to get Kurogiri to take the bullets out and possibly stitch them up later but he was too angry at the man for allowing him to get shot in the first place. At least he wasn't bleeding everywhere anymore.

He turned his mind to more pressing matters, namely Verdant's identity. As soon as he had decayed the boys mask he knew he recognised him and considering how little he got out, there was only one place it could've been from.

A few years ago he had hacked into Sensei's database out of sheer curiosity. He still wasn't sure if the man was unaware of the fact he had seen his files, or simply didn't care but he had never brought it up to Tomura. Most of it was boring: tracking money coming and going, deals with various groups, and the like. What had caught Tomura's eye however was the folder that contained pages and pages of young faces.

Tomura had closed the document when he had seen five year old him staring back from his computer screen.

He hadn't wanted to think about the implications, preferring ignorance to having his world crumble around him again.

Unfortunately for Sensei, he wasn't a child anymore.

There were no names attached to the pictures, only serial numbers, but there was no doubt in his mind that he was right.

Verdant was one of the kids in Sensei's files.

In fact, he had stuck in Tomura's mind so strongly because he was the picture directly following his own.

For the first time in a long while, Tomura felt something beyond anger and a need to destroy. He wanted to find out Verdant's name. He wanted to know what connected all of the children in those pictures. He wanted to know why they all had such startlingly blank looks on their young faces.

Tomura booted up his computer to begin his search.

He would have to pay Verdant a visit soon.

Chapter End Notes

> And we're done with part 1 of Ashes and Evergreens! This is my first finished multi-chapter fic and I hope you've had as much fun reading it as I have writing!
>
> Parts 2 and 3 are fully planned out and I'm so excited to get started with them. This series will be going on a short hiatus probably until the end of February because I need to focus on my uni assignments and then get enough of a backlog of chapters that posting weekly is possible. I hate that this is the case but comments really do motivate me so it will probably be earlier if there's enough comments. Make sure to subscribe to the series so you're notified when the first chapter of Among the Burning Roots is posted!
>
> Thank you for reading!

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!